The Women's Quarterly

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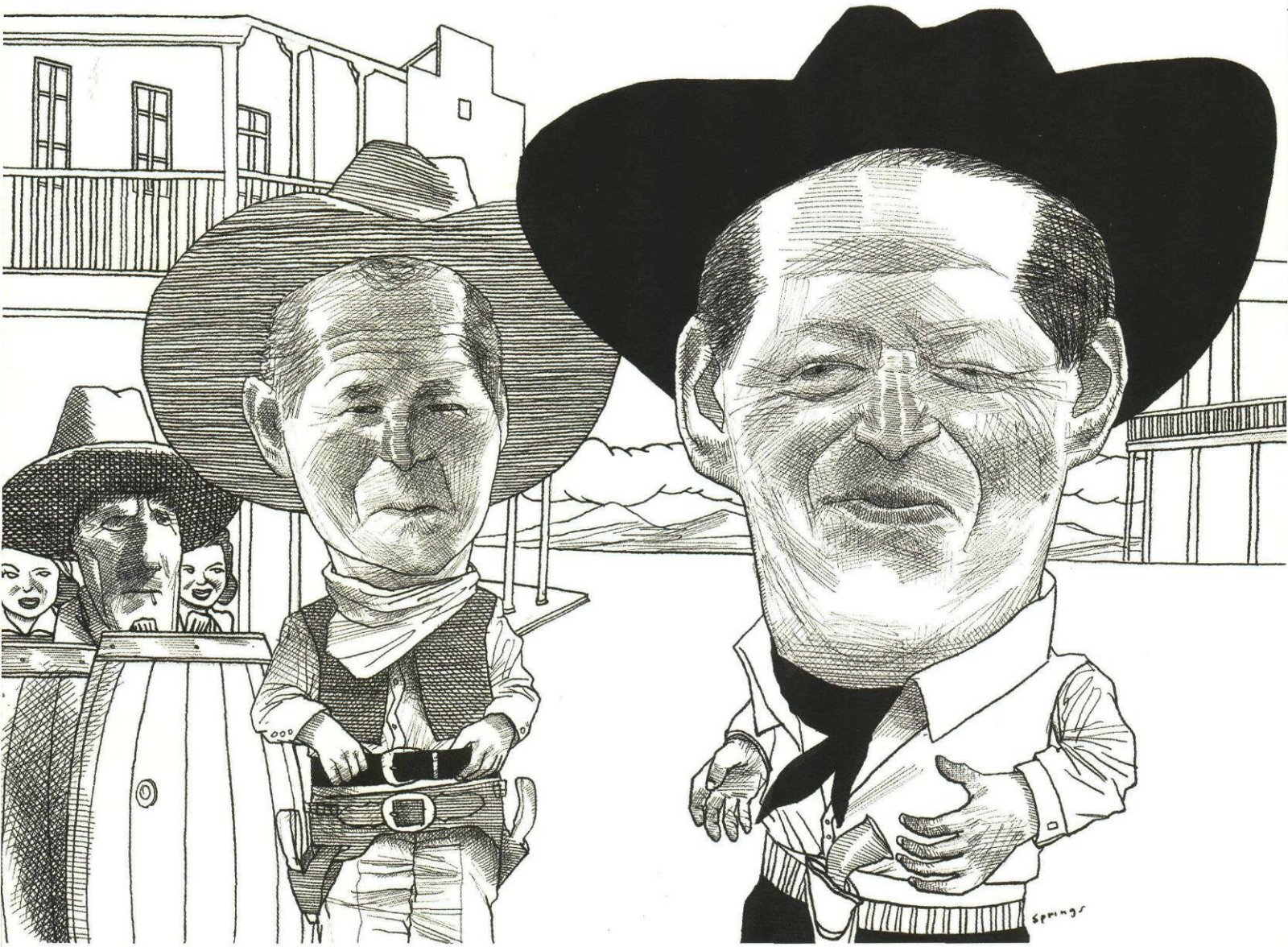
Showdown at Gender Gap



Plus Melinda Sidak on Presidential Moms, Tom Bethell on Media Buzzing, & the Irrepressible Kate O'Beirne

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Diary

Proud to be a "Revolting Hag"

ANYONE WHO WANTED a look at the face of contemporary feminism could get an eyeful at the Feminist Majority Foundation-sponsored Expo 2000.

It was not a pretty sight. I am not referring here to female pulchritude: It was the *attitude* that was ugly. As *Ms.* magazine editor Marcia Gillespie summed it up in a much-applauded speech: "You don't live in the belly of the beast without getting B.O." The smelly beast referred to is the United States.

Another speaker, Emily Levine, a "feminist comedienne," compared Nancy Reagan unfavorably to Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi's wife: "It's no longer a Mrs. Reagan universe," Levine said, describing the former first lady as "a woman who dieted down so much that her head was bigger than her body."

"The universe is fat and wrinkled," she said approvingly. "It's a Mrs. Gadhafi universe."

While the *Washington Post* reported that the meaning of the gathering was that "feminism is not dead, but it's different," I got another message entirely: The thrust of the convention was that women are better off with more and more government intervention in their lives.

What I took away is that, despite the bravado of their rhetoric, the vaunted "paradigm shift" ushered in by feminism isn't really as radical as is generally supposed: Uncle Sam simply has replaced husband and father. Many of the speeches reflected an almost palpable yearning for security. As I wandered among the exhibits, I heard one speaker up on the stage decrying attempts to "frighten" us into believing that Social Security won't be available for us. Far from entertaining the realistic notion that such programs may have their limits, she exhorted women to demand more.

While asking the government to do more and more, many speakers saw no irony in heaping abuse on the economic system that has produced the government's wealth. Sharon Gless, who portrayed Cagney on the TV series *Cagney and Lacey*, demanded: "We must challenge global capitalism and, like our friends in Seattle, make our voices heard." The friends to whom Gless referred were those agitated souls who protested the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle.

The general tenor was angry and intellectually chaotic. Feminist theologian Mary Daly, 71, who is engaged in a legal battle arising out of her refusal to admit men to her classes at Boston College, was a major star.

The rather grandmotherly Daly, whose mere presence moved several young women to tears, displayed a pamphlet entitled *Revolting Hag*. If you think that a revolting hag is revolting, you would be wrong. In fact, to quote from Daly's acclaimed *Wickedary of the English Language*, a "revolting hag" is "a stunning, beauteous crone"; a crone is a "survivor of the perpetual witchcraze of patriarchy." Daly was hawking her books, raising money for her "legal defense fund," and passing out hortatory buttons that read: "Sin BIG."

It makes me feel positively ancient to complain about the way the younger generation dresses. Still, I must confess that I was dismayed by the large number of young women sporting what a friend dubbed "the Brandon Teena look." Brandon Teena, *née* Teena Brandon, was the transgendered youth Hillary Swank played in the Academy Award-winning movie *Boys Don't Cry*.

The Wizard of Oz apparently is yet another transgendered classic. A feminist scholar, who spoke in a session on "Raising Feminist Children," commented that many characters in L. Frank Baum's beloved *Oz* series change their sex: "I think there is a deep gender story going on here," she chirped.

I was amused at something distinctly feminine in an old-fashioned way. Feminist Majority doyenne Eleanor Smeal, dressed from head to toe in shades of purple—the organization's color of choice—with a color-coordinated lavender eyeglass case, noted that Rep. Patsy Mink was sick and unable to attend.

"Write her a thank-you note for all she's done," Smeal urged repeatedly. Thank-you note indeed! I can't imagine a male CEO putting it quite that way. Even after four decades of incendiary rhetoric, they still can't shed all vestiges of the X chromosome.

–Charlotte Hays

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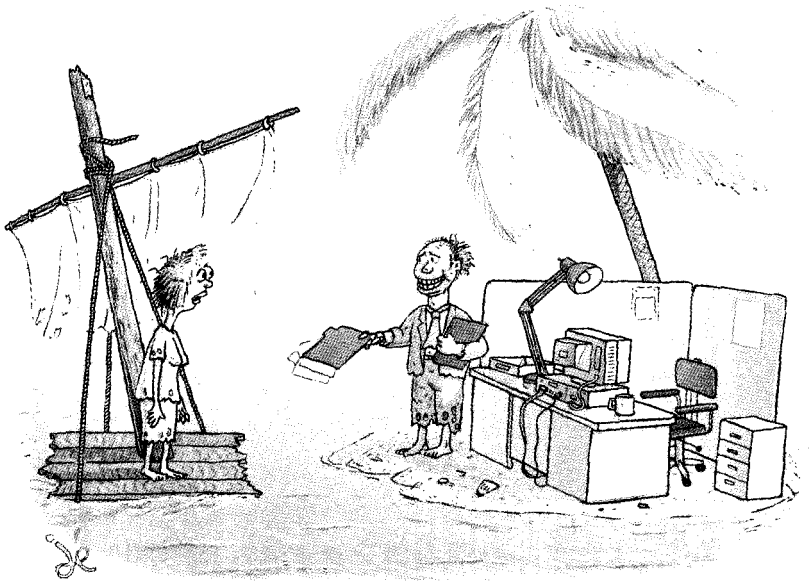

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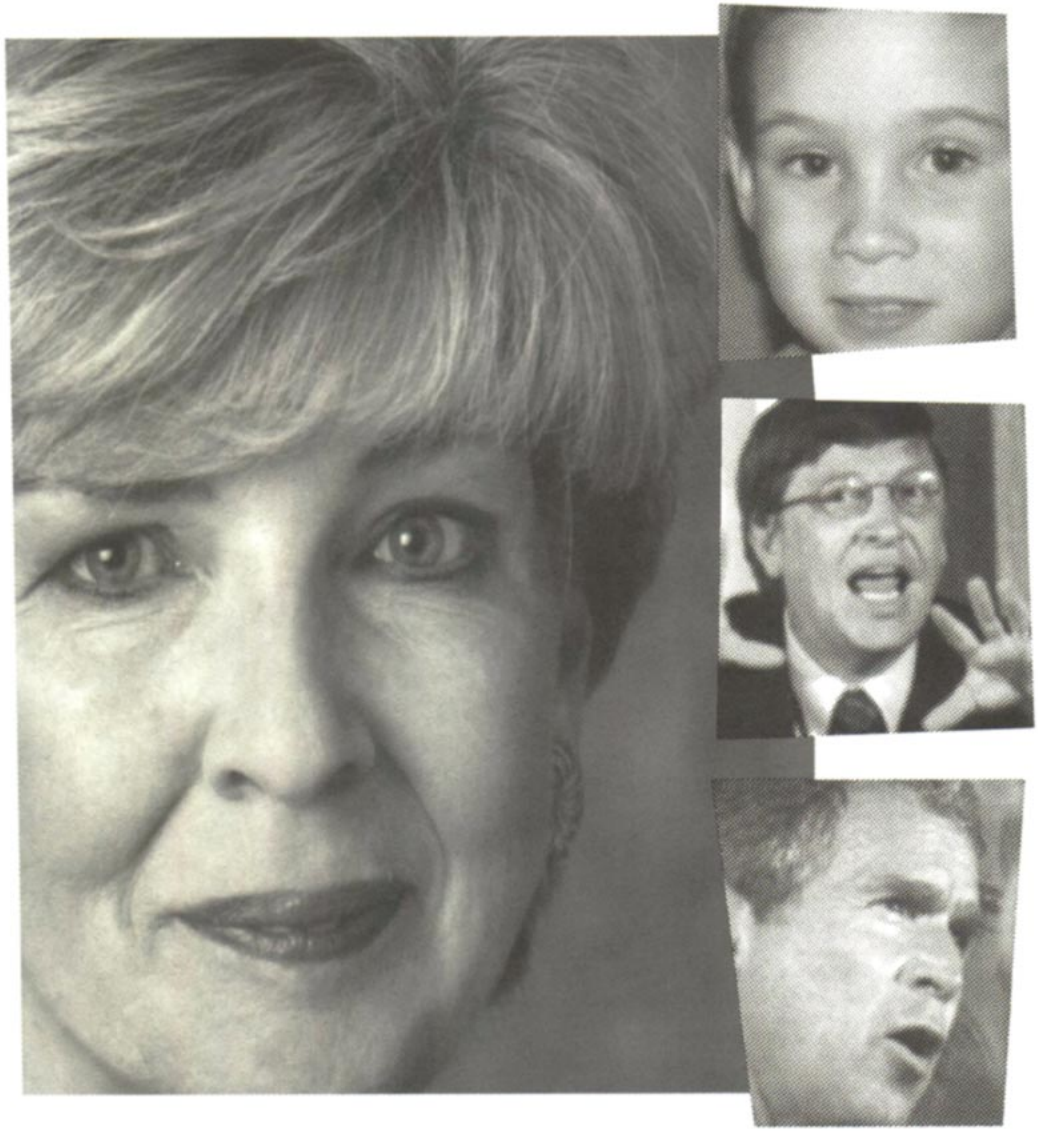
Interview

Bare Knuckles with Pundit Kate O'Beirne

Kate O'Beirne pulls no punches talking to ***Charlotte Hays*** about Al, W., and other Washington battles



FEISTY KATE O'BEIRNE has one of the dream jobs in journalism—Washington editor of the National Review (NR). *O'Beirne joined the magazine after serving as a vice president of the Heritage Foundation. O'Beirne, who was once caricatured in* NR *sitting on a whisky bottle and plucking a harp (both references to her Irish roots) regularly slugs it out on CNN's* Capital Gang. TWQ *talked to O'Beirne in her Capitol Hill office.*

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TWQ: During the highpoint of the Elian Gonzalez uproar, you almost got the feeling from the media that the United States would be bad for Elian. NBC's Andrea Mitchell asked Fidel Castro in an interview if the boy might be "seduced" by American abundance. One popular columnist wrote that if Elian stayed here, he would be "spoiled" and become "the permanent kid in the candy shop."

O'BEIRNE: It's revolting, isn't it? Do they want to send their own children to Cuba? I think we're seeing a lot of things in the dispute over Elian Gonzalez. I think we're seeing a lot of anti-Americanism—you know our evil, materialist culture. We're also seeing old and naïve views about the purity of both poverty and communism. They are accusing the Cuban-American community of being locked in the old, Cold War mentality as anti-communists, when there is plenty of anti-anti-communism going on here.

There has been a remarkable level of hostility to Cuban-Americans. They are the only aggrieved minority in America being told to get over it. I guess it's because they're not good minorities. They don't have the victim mentality, they are highly successful and—heavens forbid!—they've even been known to vote Republican. So much for solidarity with oppressed or aggrieved minority communities. And to watch the hypocrisy of people who typically don't much care about parent's rights! Of course, there are no parent's rights in Cuba. Elian goes back, and he is not Juan Miguel's child, he belongs to the regime. Now the poor little guy is a hero of the Revolution. I often thought how different it might have been, had the extended family in Miami been composed of two lesbians who were taking care of Elian. Sort of a dilemma. Do you take him away from the lesbian couple in Miami to send him back to a man? And I bet Juan Miguel smokes. Don't they appreciate that Janet Reno is sending him back to a father who smokes?

TWQ: How is the gun issue going to play in the upcoming election?

O'BEIRNE: Al Gore will try to make Texas look like the Wild West, as if there are shootouts in the street. But there are thirty-one states that, like Texas, have concealed-carry laws. People are not nearly as hostile to this as the Democrats think. When people are asked, which would be more effective, enforcing the laws on the books, of which there are thousands, or new gun laws, people overwhelmingly pick enforcing laws on the books. That has been the Republican message. Secondly, every past election has shown that people who support gun rights are motivated to vote on the issue. This is not true of people who just broadly support the notion of gun control. Membership in the NRA is dramatically increasing, as it invariably does when there appears to be a new threat to gun rights.

How different it might have been, had the extended family in Miami been composed of two lesbians...and don't they appreciate that Janet Reno is sending him back to a father who smokes?

TWQ: What would your advice in general be for George Bush?

O'BEIRNE: He has to convince the American public that despite the good economic times, they ought to switch leadership. That's pretty challenging. He ought not to cede the economy to Al Gore. His advisers in Austin seem to think that in a good economy, you've got to pick other issues. No, back up. Do not cede the economy to Al Gore. Don't be driven by the polls, which tell him, largely because these are good economic times, that education is at the top of the list. That's only because you have to have an answer when somebody calls and asks you what your top concern is. The problem with most polling is we've all been to fifth grade. So you think there's a correct answer. And most people don't think the federal government can do very much about education anyway. Yet, it seems at the moment that Governor Bush is paying too much attention to what those polls seem to indicate. He ought to strike out on his own agenda.

TWQ: What should he say about the economy?

O'BEIRNE: He should definitely not allow Al Gore to take credit for the balanced budget. Although, as long as there are no deficits, I don't know if the public much cares who's responsible,

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unfortunately. He should talk about growth and freedom and opportunity and concentrate on the investor class. There is a new and exciting demographic change in America that has people of relatively modest income levels owning stock for the first time. Help them begin to think of themselves as stakeholders. The Justice Department went after Microsoft. There are six million Microsoft shareholders. George Bush should talk in terms of the Justice Department's making war on six million Microsoft shareholders. Thinking changes dramatically when people realize they have a stake in corporate America. The old days of liberal Democrats making political gains by bashing corporate America are over when people with retirement accounts consider themselves investors.

TWQ: It's always amazed me that advocates of cutting taxes haven't made more headway with the public. You'd think it's the easiest issue in the world to sell—who doesn't want to keep more of their money? What's the problem?

O'BEIRNE: One central problem is public skepticism about tax cuts. Politicians pledge to cut taxes and it never happens. So, I think to some degree, the public has decided they're not going to get tax cuts and they're not going to want what they can't have. Also, often we talk about taxes in too abstract terms without telling an individual family what the package would be worth to them—if we're successful in passing this package of tax cuts, it will mean $1,100 to your family. And there is the problem of withholding. When you ask the American public what are their major expense items for the family household budget, they don't even mention taxes. Because of the evil of withholding, they don't even see the money they've paid in taxes. Being told some of their own money will be returned to them doesn't necessarily connect with them because they don't think of it as their money.

Al Gore will try to make Texas look like the Wild West, as if there are shootouts in the street.

TWQ: What advice would you give Al Gore? How could he win?

O'BEIRNE: Such a thought experiment. I think he loses the likability contest. I subscribe to George Will's notion that a critical element in picking a president is who the American public want in their living rooms for the next four years. I think Bill Clinton always had likability in his favor. I find him odious, but objectively, I can see how there's likability in Bill Clinton. I think Governor Bush wins the likability contest with Al Gore. So, what Al Gore has to do is create doubts about Governor Bush's ability to serve as president, that he is too unseasoned, inexperienced, and hope that the American public, come November, says, "Governor Bush, nice guy, good guy, nice family, not ready to be president."

TWQ: Is he ready to be president?

O'BEIRNE: I think he's absolutely ready to be president. He's had more governing experience as a chief executive in Texas than Al Gore has had in his whole career. He's had more relevant experience than you'd get as either a member of Congress, a senator, or vice president. But, if Al Gore successfully creates doubts in the mind of the American public, that would be a problem for Governor Bush.

TWQ: Bob Jones University is known as a hotbed of anti-Catholicism. When Bush visited, some said he's lost the Catholic vote. What do you think?

O'BEIRNE: It became a big issue because it was Governor Bush who went there. The media loved this issue. The backdrop was the Confederate flag; it was an opportunity to paint Governor Bush—who'd come out of Texas as this new compassionate conservative—as a right-winger, and to hang the idiosyncratic views of Bob Jones University around his neck. Of course the media's favorite candidate, John McCain, benefited from this. As long as John McCain was willing so unfairly to smear Governor Bush, the media were more than happy to play along. I am a Catholic myself, and I know that most Catholics couldn't care less about the marginalized views of Bob Jones University, or what appears on their web site. We're more concerned about the really offensive and routine insults to Catholicism that the mainstream culture represents. Catholics I talk to are more suspicious of the fact that Governor Bush doesn't drink. I've had more of them say, "What do you mean he doesn't drink?" than "Why

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did he go to Bob Jones University?"

TWQ: When push comes to shove, the media are going to do everything to help Gore. My theory is that the media will say, "We've got two guys who are similar, and we are just *sooo* bored." Because there supposedly is no story, they won't aggressively cover the campaign, and this helps Gore. What about this?

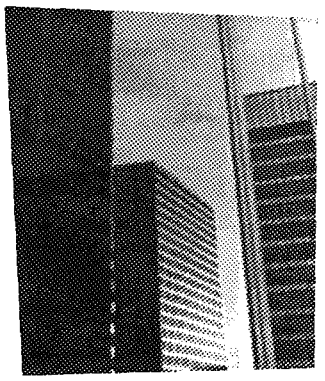
O'BEIRNE: I think they'll help Gore in making the case that Governor Bush is not ready. Governor Bush has his father's gift for misstatements. They'll blow them out of proportion and then they'll all be writing stories about an emerging pattern that indicates Bush's lack of familiarity with the issues or that he's not a very deep thinker. They'll definitely help carry that kind of water for Gore.

TWQ: How should we read the newspapers and watch network TV during the election season? Should we be skeptical?

O'BEIRNE: There's no great love affair with Al Gore, but there's a great hostility to conservative Republicans. Bush's media coverage was better before he became, in the course of the primaries, identified as "the more conservative candidate." But, I think that was the net plus of the John McCain challenge. It permitted George Bush to define himself as a conservative. I'm not really very worried about the media. Who got more positive coverage from them than John McCain? And it didn't work.

TWQ: You served on a presidential commission to study what women can do in the military. Where do you stand on the issue?

O'BEIRNE: Under the banner of equal opportunity, the demand for full integration of women means special treatment for women. They want special breaks—a woman shouldn't have to perform the same physical tests as a man. This agenda is driven not by women in uniform, but by their civilian advocates, who would never find themselves or their children serving in the military. The most powerful argument against women in combat, however, is not their relative physical strength. It is that decent men protect women in the face of a physical threat. The typical American male cannot pretend that the soldier to the right of him is a man and not a woman. If this bizarre social experiment of moving women closer and closer to the front lines is going to continue, American mothers had better be put on notice that we've got to start raising our sons differently. We've got to start telling them, "You'd better go hit that girl. Well, what did you do when she called you a name? Did you hit her?"



The old days of liberals making political gains by bashing corporate America are over when people with retirement accounts consider themselves investors.

TWQ: We live in a world of hall monitors who constantly remind us that negative political ads are bad, bad, bad. But you can't run for office if you can't say your opponent is a dirty dog, can you?

O'BEIRNE: I prefer negative ads. It's more honest, frankly. You're taking on the other guy; you're pointing out to people why they shouldn't be voting for him. It's really an incredibly foolish concern. Again, polls tell us that the American public doesn't like negative ads. Well, of course. They are supposed to say that. But negative ads work, don't they?

TWQ: You wrote recently that, if Gore is elected, it will signify that Bill Clinton has succeeded in neutralizing the left-wing, nut case fringe of his party, and that we are no longer scared of it. Can you elucidate that?

O'BEIRNE: Bill Clinton has shown the Democrats how to avoid giving Republicans those big juicy liberal targets. In the old days, when the Democratic Party stood for amnesty, acid, and abortion, even dopey Republicans could attack that. But now they're keeping the tainted fringe left sort of under wraps. They understand what the stakes are.

TWQ: The Democrats know how not to be pilloried because of their fringe elements. The Republicans do less well with keeping theirs under wraps. Why?

O'BEIRNE: Two things. The Democratic fringe groups understand the stakes better, and the stakes are more important to them because they care about power. The left wing is in real trouble if it doesn't control government. The right wing of the Repub-

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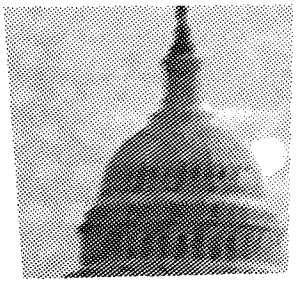
lican Party typically wants to be left alone. Leave our schools alone, leave our kids alone, don't be shoving this stuff down our throats, we'd like more of our money back. They don't need to control government as much as the Democrats do who live off government. Government largely funds them. So many left-wing groups are grantees of the federal government. They are either doing studies for the federal government or they are funded to do outreach on behalf of the federal government. Unions obviously need to stack the deck in their favor. They can't live with a national right to work law. Very few voluntary dollars flow to the left wing. They normally use the power of government to fill their own coffers. And that's not true of the right, so the left understands what the stakes are, and the stakes matter more to them.

TWQ: You're a conservative and you're a woman. Have you ever been discriminated on either of those accounts?

O'BEIRNE: Not that I'm aware of. Of course I've never had a chip on my shoulder either. I went to law school at St. John's in New York in 1973, when only 20 percent of the class were women. I found it perfectly hospitable. Some of my female classmates thought I was a traitor to the sex. One time, a Wall Street firm came to the campus to interview candidates for jobs. We were all going to interviews in thirty-minute increments. In the lounge later in the afternoon, one of my feminist classmates comes by, looking for me, and said "Where is she? Where is she? I'm going to kill her." She said she had just been interviewed, and the representative from the firm had asked, "What do you plan on being fifteen years from now?" Of course, the obligatory answer was I want to have been made partner in a law firm. I want to have made some sort of significant contribution in my area of practice, whatever. Earlier in the day, he'd asked me the same question. She said that the whole time she was giving her serious answer, he was chuckling to himself. She was distracted, and when she finished, he said, "Well, you know what somebody else said this morning when I asked what she planned on being in fifteen years? She said, 'five years older.'" My classmate said, "I knew as soon as he said it that it was you. Don't you know that it hurts all of us, when you fool around like that? You stereotype us." I was thinking, "Lighten up." Later, I got the call back because obviously, given the choice, they would rather hire somebody with a sense of humor as a colleague.



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TWQ: What did you do after law school?

O'BEIRNE: By the time I was out of law school, I had married, and my husband was in the worst possible career for a wife with a law degree, which was an army officer. We found ourselves in California, in Germany, and in North Carolina. It was actually fine. I figured I could practice later. Our older fellow was born in Germany and our younger guy was born in California. We were finally back in Washington in the mid-eighties, and I started saying to my husband, "Jim, I cannot miss the Reagan revolution. It just can't happen without me." I was in Germany when President Reagan was elected. By the time we were back in Washington, our older boy was in school full-time, the younger was in school part-time. I went to work for the Reagan administration as deputy assistant secretary at Health and Human Services.

TWQ: Can you tell us a little bit about your background? People who see you on TV would be interested.

O'BEIRNE: I have three sisters, no brothers, and we are all products of women's schools, at least for high school and college, which makes you a feminist in the right sense of the word. There's no mistake that both Eleanor Smeal and Phyllis Schlafly are the products of nuns. We were taught by these accomplished women, who felt it was terribly important to educate women. We didn't have to compete with men; we got to do everything. You weren't photo editor of the yearbook; you were editor of the yearbook. You weren't treasurer of the student body; you were president of the student body. I'm a huge believer in all-women schools. As a result of these schools, I have sisters who are self-confident, outspoken, and sure of themselves. ◆

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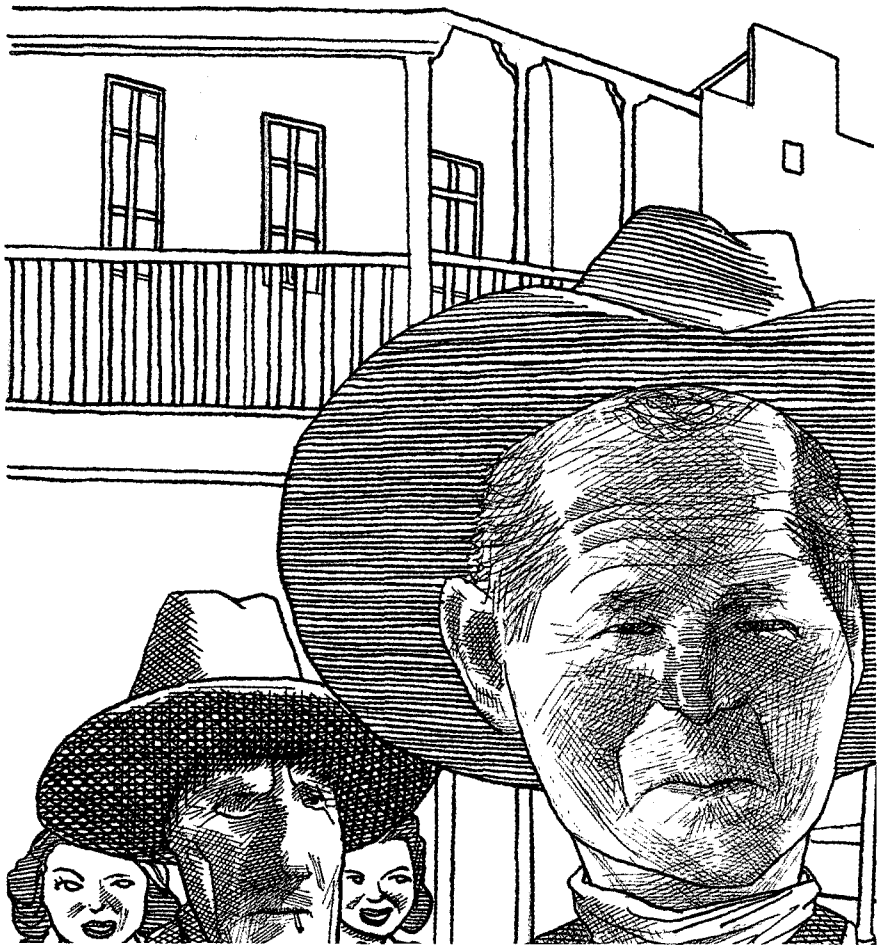
Cover

Showdown at Gender Gap

Charlotte Hays on guys and gals and votin'



When Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, the feminist movement struggled to come to terms with defeat. As Kathy Bonk later recalled in "The Selling of the 'Gender Gap,'" a chapter in a book on gender politics, NOW's Eleanor Smeal asked herself: "Is there any ray of hope in the election results?"

There was. Smeal found it a few days later when she read a *New York Times* article that cross-tabulated responses by sex of pro-ERA and anti-ERA voters and observed that Reagan's "long-standing difficulties" in getting women to vote for him held down his percentages.

For Smeal, a trained political scientist, this was the genesis of an epiphany: "Nearly everyone looked at the election results as 'Women: 45 percent Carter, 46 percent Reagan' only one percent difference, with fewer women voting for Carter," wrote Bonk. But, "Smeal saw in the data: 'Women 46 percent for Reagan, Men 54 percent for Reagan'—an eight per cent difference—a woman's voting bloc."

While Reagan pollster Richard Wirthlin was also trying to fathom the meaning of Reagan's trailing numbers with women, NOW prepared for the general meeting of the Democratic National Committee in 1981 by putting together a large chart entitled "Reagan's Female Problem." When Smeal asked Betsey Dunn, another NOW official, to come up with a term to highlight the issue, Dunn suggested "gender gap." (NOW has always claimed credit for the term; interestingly, it was used informally and earlier by Reagan pollsters.)

The gender gap became an important tool for the feminist movement, which heavily promoted the concept with the media. Bonk wrote: "[U]ntil the gender gap made front-page headlines in 1980, a women's vote was not taken seriously by mainstream politicians."

Something interesting has happened on the way to the 2000 election: The gender gap is mutating. According to a crop of late spring polls, Bush was briefly leading among women. However, a Gallup poll released on May 22 showed Gore with an eight point lead among women and Bush with an astounding 21 point lead among men.

NOW and other feminist organizations have done a brilliant job of using the gender gap concept to make candidates pay attention to them. In so doing, however, they obscured some subtleties: Women do vote differently from men; the gender gap is real. A higher percentage of women than men

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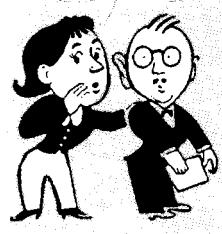
A Dirty Secret



In addition to their beliefs about the role of government, women voters differ from men in their knowledge of national politics. "If NOW does ever set up the national third party it periodically threatens, perhaps it could resurrect an old party name—the Know Nothings," Kate O'Beirne wrote in a particularly politically incorrect *National Review* column that garnered more than the normal share of outraged letters. She noted that three-quarters of women score well below men on tests measuring knowledge of national politics.

This gender gap exists even between men and women of equal education and income levels. O'Beirne discovered the knowledge gap in a book titled *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*, by Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. The authors further revealed that in one field—local politics—there is a reversal: Women actually know more about school board presidents or other issues closer to home. Even though the presidential campaign is hardly local, the focus on education may help Bush attract women voters.

In early spring, Bush was two points behind Gore on education. But compare that to the 20 point deficit on the issue President Bush had when he ran against Bill Clinton in 1992. This reflects a dramatic Republican inroad on a traditionally Democratic issue—and an issue about which women know a great deal. ◆

have cast their votes for the Democratic candidate in every presidential race since the 1980. Still, the gender gap, as Richard Morin and Claudia Deane recently argued in the *Washington Post*, "remains a visible crack in the political landscape, but not a chasm."

Although women differ from men in their voting patterns, another gap is within the women's vote—married women tend to vote Republican, while single women tend to vote Democratic. There is also a racial element. African-American women vote overwhelmingly Democratic. "Subtract out minorities and the Democratic skew among women inevitably narrows or disappears completely," Morin and Deane wrote.

A look at the early spring figures for white women from Republican pollster Ed Goeas is instructive: Among mothers in this group, Bush was beating Al Gore 55 to 37. Bush carried at-home women under age sixty-five by 57 to 35. White women over the age of sixty-five, however, were for Gore 49 to 40, and retired women preferred the vice president 53 to 35 percent. (Gore, it should be noted, whipped Bush 84 to 5 among African-American women at the time the polling was done.)

What accounts for the differences among white women? The categories of women who strongly support Gore have one thing in common: In some way, they all look to government for support, whether through Social Security or Medicare. Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute notes that women in general are more likely to believe in a strong role for government.

An ABC News poll released in April illustrates this point. Participants were asked if they preferred bigger government and more services or smaller government and fewer services. Sixty-seven percent of the male respondents said smaller government and fewer services; slightly fewer than half—46 percent—of the women wanted smaller government.

While men are more likely to embrace candidates who talk about a strong defense or getting tough with crime, women almost across the board go for candidates who promise a larger role for government. "Women are more concerned with issues that you can wrap up as security issues," explains Linda Chavez, president of the Center for Equal Opportunity. "Since the sexual revolution, women have been more vulnerable. They've decided that husbands aren't reliable, and they now look to government."

"If you ask the question, 'Is government part of the problem or part of the solution?'" says Goeas, "the majority of men say that it's part of the problem, and a plurality of women say it's part of the solution."

If there is a showdown at Gender Gap, Goeas thinks Bush will win if he shows that government is often part of the problem. Says Goeas, "Do social programs sound good? Yes, but you will have to work longer hours to pay for them."

"Government isn't very reliable and it's not without a lot of costs. It always comes with strings attached," says Chavez. "We've got to get women to understand that there's not a pot of gold out there called government money. You can foresee a situation where programs they have come to depend upon disappear or shrink—think of welfare."

Ironically, one of the dumbest things a guy in pursuit of women's votes can do is focus on the so-called women's issues. "Candidates who focus

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on abortion, breast cancer, and spousal abuse as though women cannot get beyond their own bodies have missed the point," Jody Newman and Richard Seltzer wrote in their 1997 book, *Sex As a Political Variable*. Despite the skillful sleight of hand by feminist groups, on these issues, there is no gender gap. In fact, Newman pointed out, men and women's positions on abortion and equal rights are identical; contrary to the feminist myth, as many women as men consider themselves anti-abortion.

"Abortion is conspicuously absent among women as an important issue. To the extent that they mention it at all, they tend to be two to one anti-abortion," says Republican pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick.

Still, on abortion, an issue that can be used to demonize the pro-life Bush among pro-choice members of his own party, Richard Billmire, a Republican consultant, says Bush should state his position "once and not all the time." Billmire believes that general demeanor will be more important. "Women want deals cut, men love banging heads," Billmire says. "Women say, 'Stop screaming and beating your chest and come to an understanding.'"

One way Bush will court the woman voter, says Billmire, is by enlisting Texas Democrats to come forward and talk about how well they worked with the governor. Billmire sees the myriad newspaper stories mentioning Bush's "sneer" as an effort to paint him as arrogant or stupid.

But it doesn't appear to be working. Goeas says that, much to the chagrin of Democratic pollsters, "Women are seeing Bush in focus groups as humble. He has a bit of an aw shucks, self-deprecating image, and a lot of the southern women think that the smirk is sexy."

Just as Republicans have their first sexy national candidate since...well, since a long time ago...another expert on the gender gap offers a bit of counterintuitive advice: Forget about it. "Any smart Republican doesn't care about the gender gap. He cares about getting the most number of voters," says Jody Newman.

In *Sex as a Political Variable*, Newman and Seltzer noted that "it is not necessary for a candidate to 'close the gender gap' in order to win an election. Reagan won handily in 1980 with the same gender gap Bob Dole had in 1996.... As the old political cliché goes, all that counts is winning 50 percent of the vote plus one, and this applies whether the votes come from men or women."

Indeed, Bob Dole's flirtation with the woman voter may have backfired. "[T]o the extent that his campaign targeted women over men," Newman and Seltzer wrote, "it may have been aiming at exactly those voters it was least likely to win over."

The obsession with how women vote causes us to overlook an equally important phenomenon: how men vote. The Republican's gender gap was created not by women rallying to the Democratic banner but by men fleeing it. From 1952 to 1998, the proportion of men who called themselves Democrats declined from 59 to 49 percent. At the same time, the proportion of women who identified themselves as Democrats fell, too, but only from 58 to 54 percent. As Newman and Seltzer pointed out: "By definition the Republicans' 'problem with women' is exactly the same size as the Democrats' 'problem with men.'"

"Now the gender gap is a Democratic problem rather than a Republican one," says Goeas, "and I believe any mathematician would agree." ◆

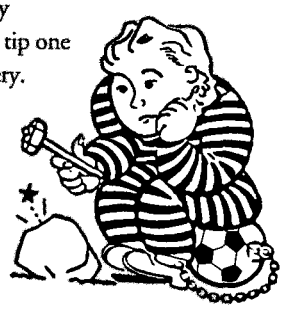
Busting the Soccer Mom

Seemingly she held the fate of the Republic in her hands in 1996. "The soccer mom is precisely the kind of regular Jane Doe Mr. Dole must attract," Alex Castellanos, the Republican consultant, told the *Wall Street Journal*. Both Castellanos and Celinda Lake, the Democratic pollster, are said to have coined the catchy term, which launched a thousand headlines.

Just how important was the soccer mom? Defined as the married suburban mother with at-home children and a college education, she was 6 percent of the electorate in 1996—hardly worth the fuss. Defined simply as the suburban white mom, her ranks swell to include around 12 percent. But this group is so diverse as to be meaningless, including both a woman living in tract housing and a rich socialite.

Like so many things in political reporting, the soccer mom was hype. Clinton beat Bob Dole 54 percent to 38 percent among women in general. Among married women, however, Clinton beat Dole only 48 percent to 43 percent. In fact, it was unmarried women who really helped Clinton; 62 percent of them voted for him.

Who'll be the next soccer mom? The "waitress mom" enjoyed a brief vogue. Democrats, however, want to forget her, jokes GOP pollster Ed Goeas, since Hillary Clinton's failure to tip one at a New York eatery.



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Panting After the Vixen Vote

Dave Shiflett offers advice on how to seduce the female voter. It's an old, old story, fellas

AMONG THE MORE amusing developments of this political season has been the re-emergence of the Tough Guy. Teddy Roosevelt ruled the hearts of John McCain and his supporters, who seem to have believed TR's muscular persona offered a nice switch from Bill Clinton's moral and physical (after business hours) flaccidity. Similarly, Albert Gore is said to have taken virility lessons and has been flexing his pecs with the apparent hope that a bit more chest will help him whip Dubya, himself a pure embodiment of the towel-snapping frat-house prez.

But this is all a very thin facade, a slight nod to the good old days when Tough Guys were in demand. The fact is, those days are long gone. Were the Rough Rider to gallop suddenly onto the modern political stage, the soccer moms would have his head on the wall in seconds flat. Likewise, the notion that lipstick feminist Naomi Wolf was teaching Gore to be an Alpha Male was ridiculous. She wasn't teaching him to be an Alpha Male, but an Alan Alda Male. As for Dubya, he might as well change his initials from G.W. to P.W.

What's going on here? It's quite simple: The candidates are in full pursuit of the Vixen Vote, and in order to please the ladies they are assuming the proper position which, these days, means draining the testosterone and refilling with pure sap. Even Pat Buchanan's pitchfork has gone limp. How else to explain his nuzzling up to Lenora Fulani, whose advice to Madame Bobbitt would have been, "A bit more off the top, dear."

Those of us on the male side of the gender gap might be expected to recoil from this shameless pandering, and in fact, there is some grumbling in the stag rooms, but only of a very superficial type. For reasons explained a bit further on, most of us men know exactly what these candidates are up to, and it brings a smile to our faces.

Before getting to that, however, it is worth putting on the record exactly what many female voters are demanding from *Homo Erectus Politicus*. In these matters, as in so many others, there is no higher source of information than the highly alluring poll watcher and American Enterprise Institute resident fellow Karlyn Bowman.

Back in the good old days, Bowman began, there wasn't a great deal of difference between the way women and men voted. Yet in the late 1970s and early '80s, Republicans began to discover diverging interests, which coincided with the return of women to the workplace in large numbers. Pollster Richard Wirthlin and associates conducted some 20,000 inter-

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views in 1981 and 1982 and found differences they had not seen before.

"Pollsters were used to tracking the attitudes of Catholics, Protestants, and people from differing economic backgrounds," Bowman purred. "But now they were seeing differences in men's and women's attitudes." Soon enough we knew not only what men who brought in fifty grand a year thought about the vexing issues of the day. We had the same information about women who lived with cats. Politicians being what they are, they started promising catnip.

So what do these women want? According to Bowman, they want a candidate who is very hesitant to use military force. In the Gulf War, for instance, men were not too disturbed at the prospect of civilian casualties, while women were appalled. Women also cotton to the idea of national health insurance, and support the notion that government should provide jobs to those who cannot find them on their own. These interests clearly reflect what is called, in scientific quarters, the female nesting impulse (FNI), though Bowman didn't put it that way.

"Men have a higher willingness to take risks," she noted. "If you ask who would like to ride on the space shuttle, men are all for it, but women would hesitate. The same is true for locating a nuclear plant in your backyard. Men don't worry, while women don't like the idea at all." In a provocative suggestion, Bowman added that "size doesn't matter." She was referring, of course, to the size of the gender gap. Republican candidates who earn less support among female voters can make up for it by garnering more male votes. Democrats also play to their strengths. There is no doubt that women are swinging an increasingly large political club. The Democratic electorate was about 55 percent female in the recent primaries.

There are some who would say that this desire for a more powerful government is a damning indictment of the female voter. But the greater truth is that what we are seeing here is simply the continuation of an age-old transaction: support for security. There is one new wrinkle, to be sure. Many of these gals insist that Sugar Daddy Sam not be anywhere near as aggressive as, say, Bay Buchanan.

So, what do men think of all this?

As mentioned earlier, pandering to the female vote has caused some grumbling, but only a little. Men know, after all, that "getting on base" often requires extraordinary measures. Consider Al Gore's heroic attempts to seduce this constituency. Clearly hoping to overcome his reputation as a Vietnam Vet, Al was forced to reach deep into his trousers and pay Ms. Wolf fifteen grand a month for sensitivity training. This couldn't have been easy for a guy who not long ago was reduced to begging crumbs from Buddhist nuns. But it seems to have worked. These days, Al's more sensitive than a burn victim, at least in his public persona.

Dubya, meanwhile, can't seem to say four words without two of them being "compassionate." Every time you turn on the television he seems to be having a heart-to-heart with a bunch of elementary school children, which used to raise certain suspicions among adults. But the governor knows exactly what he's doing. He may look frightfully like Ernest T. Bass, the rock-throwing yokel from the *Andy Griffith Show*. But when it comes to laying out a line to the lady voters, Dubya is a true Texas playboy.

Indeed, Bush is operating right out of the very playbook most men keep in their personal libraries. In the chapter entitled "Covert Operations" it is explained that in order to score with females, "it is often necessary to appear vulnerable and therefore non-threatening. In some cases, we can get the goods only by debasing ourselves. This is known as the 'sensitive man' strategy."

No doubt, many readers of this fine publication have experienced one of this strategy's more popular manifestations: The Vietnam Jungle Patrol Lone Survivor Gambit (page 678 in the official playbook). For those not so fortunate, the scheme works this way: Once a target of conquest is chosen, the male begins a harrowing tale of walking point through Sector 23. With a bit of mist in his eyes, he relates how his entire company was suddenly cut down by withering machine-gun fire. At this point, it is suggested he say something along the lines of "I was only eighteen."

If the target draws closer, the fat is clearly in the fire. The story grows ever more horrifying—the bayoneting of survivors, the wrenching decision to stay hidden (except for the discreet knifing of a few VC stragglers), the collection of cold dog tags—and then reaches its moment of truth: "I used to think I was a rock. But I discovered that sometimes I am very frightened and very much need a friend to hold me."

Crude? Most assuredly. In fact, nothing short of pathetic. Yet this often-told tale has put more fellows into more knickers than can reasonably be calculated.

There's no doubt that the candidates are practicing this gambit on a national scale, and it is this knowledge that saves many of us from lapsing into total, abject despair. ◆

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Like Mother, Like Son

Al Gore and George W. Bush are always compared to their powerful fathers. But *Melinda Ledden Sidak* shows how their powerful mothers were more important

In the 1950s, when Al Gore and George W. Bush were growing up, it was fashionable to blame Mom for virtually every problem or failure of her offspring. Whether he was late in toilet training, refused to eat his peas, or became an ax murderer, it was all mother's fault. The myth of the all-powerful mother figure was further fueled by social critic Philip Wylie's harsh diatribe denouncing "Momism," a sort of mother worship supposedly emasculating the nation's men and contributing to the steady deterioration of American culture.

The role of Mom has been considerably downgraded today. Psychologists are much more likely to tell Mom to chill out and dump the kids at the day-care center while she pursues personal fulfillment. Nonetheless, there is no denying that mothers can have a strong influence in shaping the values and personalities of their children. Much has been written about the quasi-competitive relationships between Gore and Bush and their politically prominent and successful fathers.

The cascade of Oedipal analyses, however, leaves one wondering, about the perhaps *greater* impact that Barbara Bush and Pauline Gore have had on their sons. A common thread among many of the nation's most influential presidents has been a strong relationship with their mothers. Political scientist Charles O. Jones told the *Boston Globe* last fall, for example, that the six most important presidents of the twentieth century—"Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Richard Milhous Nixon, and Ronald Wilson Reagan—all bore their mother's family name. The mothers appear to be the ones who were nurturing and stimulating leadership in future presidents.'" Neither Bush nor Gore bears his mother's family name, but both have strong mothers who have profoundly influenced their lives.

Pauline Gore, *née* LaFon, came from a relatively poor family in West Tennessee. Smart and attractive, she was one of the first female graduates of Vanderbilt Law School. She worked nights as a waitress in a coffee shop, where she met Albert Gore, Sr. After two years, they took the bar exam together and she practiced law for a year in Texarkana. Apparently, she did not enjoy it and eloped with Albert in 1937. The ceremony itself seemed odd. No family members were present, and a note on the marriage certificate stated that news of the marriage was not to be published. The certificate also noted that Pauline had already been married and divorced, a chapter in her life she has never wanted to discuss.

The second marriage to Albert Gore, who died last year, by all accounts was a happy one, and she put aside her own law career to concentrate exclusively on Albert's. Descriptions of their political partnership sound not unlike the Clintons'. According to a *Washington Post* report by David Maraniss and Ellen Nakashima, "she traveled with her husband, polished his speeches, coined his slogans, spoke as his stand-in without hesitation, and talked policy with him at the dinner table, usually pushing him to be more liberal."

Many said she was the brains in the family. Her political instincts were finer, and reporter David Halberstam, who once covered the Gores, told the *Post*, "She was smarter, tougher, more calculating." And according to longtime political reporter Charles Bartlett, "You have to understand Pauline to know Al Junior. She was the leavening influence." Observers readily note the similarities between Albert Senior's formal manners, stiff bearing, and pedantic style and those of his son. But Halberstam's and Barlett's comments are a

 AP Photo/Mark Humphrey

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clue to a less benign trait of Al Junior's —his political nastiness and street fighter instincts.

Gore's upbringing was very weird. He was raised at the Fairfax Hotel in Washington (which was owned by relatives) surrounded by hotel employees and elderly co-residents. Supposedly Pauline Gore tried to make the hotel more like home by baking her own bread and preparing breakfast for little Al. The question no one seems to ask, however, is *why* the senior Gores chose to raise young children in a hotel instead of a house. Senators and congressmen who bring their families with them to Washington do not generally live in hotels.

Why did Pauline never insist on her own home in Washington? Did she not worry about the relative isolation from other children and families the hotel created for her son? Or was that the point? A hotel is a kind of fantasy world, a place many people associate with escaping real life. Might the world of the Fairfax provide a clue to Al's apparent inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, whether his starring role in the book *Love Story* or his invention of the Internet?

Pauline's Hillary Clinton-like vicarious ambition burned as brightly for her son as it did for her husband. She proudly tells of her use of the dinner table to teach and prod her son. "I selected guests for us. If it so happened there was a great guest who was a good conversationalist and the issue was proper for me and my son, then I would see if I could wedge Al in." She would ask Al and his cousins, "Which one of you is going to be president?" She called the newspapers to report precocious things he had said.

According to most observers, there was never a moment when little Al thought he might grow up to be a scientist, an astronaut, or a policeman; it was always assumed he'd go into politics. The former headmaster of St. Albans has compared Al Junior's upbringing to that of Prince Charles, "being raised for public service." His childhood friends told the *Post* that "it was never a question of if, but *when* Al would become president."

But the Gores themselves, sensitive to charges of elitism and "programming" their son for politics, took pains to resist that characterization in later interviews. Pauline, Al Senior, and Al Junior all emphasized the boy's happy summers at the family farm in Carthage, Tennessee. Pauline argues that "His life was very well balanced, in that he had both places to grow up in." She and Albert Senior also denied that they had in any way pushed Al toward politics as a youth. Ten years ago, however, she was willing to admit to the *Los Angeles Times* that "Al was fairly much a conformist.... Al wanted to find out what I wanted him to do and he'd do it."

By contrast, there is no evidence Barbara Bush ever prodded her eldest son or, indeed, any of her children, toward a political destiny. An important difference between Pauline Gore and Barbara Bush is that Mrs. Gore had only one son in whom she vested all her hopes and frustrated ambitions. Al Junior came along ten years after his older sister, Nancy. His parents had nearly given up hope of ever having another child, let alone a son and heir. Pauline and Albert Senior were older parents and little Al was raised almost as an only child. The fact that early on he had adopted the manners and demeanor of a little adult therefore is not surprising. George W., by contrast, was one of five children and three sons,

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and his parents were in their early twenties when he was born, practically teenagers. The parental pressures and expectations placed on him, even as the eldest, were therefore less intense. Indeed, his childhood generally was fairly typical and middle American, despite his family's distinguished New England pedigree.

Though he was later to attend the same kind of elite secondary school and college as Al Gore, George W.'s childhood could not have been more different. He grew up in a small Texas town and attended the local public elementary school. He lived not in a hotel, but in a three-bedroom frame house. Barbara did most of the heavy lifting of child-rearing while her husband ran an oil business and traveled often. According to a series of articles by Lois Romano and George Lardner, Jr., in the *Washington Post*, "it was Barbara Bush who set the rules and became the authority figure, while her husband was held up as a much-revered statesman-like figure among the children. It was Barbara who drove the car pools, supervised the homework, and piled five kids in a car with a housekeeper for the grueling cross-country trips to Kennebunkport for summer vacation."

In addition to being the family disciplinarian, she was also an involved, hands-on, and rather cagey mom. A case in point was her strategic use of jigsaw puzzles to initiate conversations with her children and their friends. "Before you knew it," a family friend recalled in the *Washington Post*, "you were working on the puzzle, then talking about the puzzle, and then telling her all your problems."

The formative experience for both Barbara and George W. seems to have been the tragic death of George W.'s sister, Robin, from leukemia at age four. Only seven at the time, George W. apparently was bothered that his parents did not tell him she was dying until she was already gone. Nonetheless, George W. proved to be a major source of strength, love, and support to his grief-stricken mother. It was he who sought to comfort her by playing the clown and making her laugh.

She recounts that she didn't even realize what was happening until one day she heard him tell a friend he had to stay and play with his mother because she was lonely. "I was thinking, 'Well, I'm being there for him.' But the truth was he was being there for me." That experience seems to have forged an extremely strong bond between mother and son, and even though he continued to be a bit of a cut-up who liked to push the limits of parental tolerance, his mother continued to rely on him. As a teenager, young George even drove his mother to the hospital when she was having a miscarriage and helped her to the emergency room.

Temperamentally, George W. resembles Mrs. Bush far more than he does his father. Both are feisty, spontaneous, unpretentious, and have a ready sense of humor. Both are more natural and comfortable politicians than Bush the Elder. Relatives always noticed at family gatherings that while "the physical resemblance was to George, the spirit was all Bar, headstrong and quick-witted." Mother and son, as one relative put it, were "always in your face." Bush himself jokes that "I've got my daddy's eyes and my mother's mouth." Where President Bush is famously reserved, neither Barbara nor her son hesitate to speak their minds, particularly to each other. The *Post* characterizes their "relationship of affectionate tension and banter" as "having its origins in the Texas of the 1950s, when George W. was a boy coming of age and Barbara a young mother coping with the unexpected trials of early adulthood."

With the relative normality of George W.'s upbringing, he seems like a regular guy who would very much like to be president, but it won't be the end of the world for him if he doesn't make it. He'll still have his family and he'll still do the fun, normal things he likes to do.

Gore, however, is another story. There is something eerie about his robotic, mechanical speaking style and smarmy, Eddie Haskell effect. He speaks as though his audience consists solely of dim souls who are hard of hearing—each word carefully enunciated with every third word emphasized. Even when he affects his rap-rhyming and fist-punching campaign-fight style, he is unpersuasive. He is like an android programmed by aliens with a limited understanding of how earthlings actually speak. Worse, he seems willing to do literally anything in order to become president.

As one well-known Washington pundit told me, "If you told Gore to get down and lick the floor in order to be president, he'd unhesitatingly drop to the floor. If you told Bush the same thing, he'd tell you to get lost." Maybe parental ambitions were just a shade too intense, and the programming too stifling, for Al Gore to develop a sense of proportion that might temper his zeal or a natural warmth and spontaneity that might resonate with listeners. We'll find out in November which personality is more appealing to the voters, and which Mom will be the happier. ◆

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Not a Pretty Picture: The New Face of Kiddie Porn

Virtual kiddie porn is the latest thing. *Charmaine Yoest* shows how some sickies are hiding behind the First Amendment. Next stop: the Supreme Court?

AT DAWN IN London, on September 2, 1998, police from three continents and twelve countries stormed the residences of 100 people who seemed like just average citizens. However, these people, both men and women, were all members of the Wonderland Club—a U.S.-based Internet pedophile ring that required as a membership prerequisite personal possession of at least 10,000 sexually explicit pictures of children under the age of thirteen, and a willingness to trade them. This unprecedented international sting, which was coordinated by Interpol, netted an astounding haul of more than 100,000 pornographic images of children, some as young as two years old.

Child pornography used to be an underground industry that was difficult and expensive to access, but the Internet has been a boon for pedophiles; the wonders of technology have made kiddie porn easy to produce, easy to distribute, and easy to find. Illegal kiddie porn is estimated to net between $2 to $3 billion a year and involve at least one million children in the United States alone.

While the child porn addict once had to undertake dangerous assignations, pay huge sums of money, or fly to Europe or Asia to feed his obsession, today he can easily find pictures of children being sexually assaulted, engaging in sexual acts with animals, or in other sexual poses which are sold or traded over the Internet. A child porn ring discovered during the Wonderland Club investigation even featured live Internet broadcasts of sexual abuse—the online observers were invited to offer suggestions to the perpetrators. Another web site originating in Asia offers "real schoolgirls—real abuse." For only $25.95, this site provides "unrestricted access" to sexually explicit photos of "extreme young" Asian girls and a link to something called Rape Camp Victims. Another sick site offers this come-on: "See little Black schoolgirls get [deleted] while walking home."

But the really new face of kiddie pornography is virtual porn. Using the morphing capabilities of the computer, pornographers can produce images of children in sexually explicit poses that may not involve real children. The new techno-porn is produced in two ways: There are computer-altered images created by manipulating the image of a real minor onto, say, the body of an adult engaged in sexual activity. Or an

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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ordinary picture of a child can be made to look sexually explicit. But computer images can also be created without using a real or identifiable minor at all—this is virtual porn. Viewers can't tell the difference.

Old-fashioned child pornography is clearly illegal. Unfortunately, virtual porn is more complicated: Since they don't use a real child, practitioners assert, their product is art and thus a form of speech protected by the First Amendment. The first case of computer-imported child porn was prosecuted in 1993; the defense claimed all of the images were virtual. In that case, prosecutors were able to prove that the children depicted were real, but it was a strong defense, and a harbinger of a tangled legal thicket ahead.

Recognizing the new threat posed by virtual porn, Congress in 1996 passed the Child Pornography Prevention Act, which banned depictions of children in "sexually explicit conduct" whether "virtual" or real. The child porn act prohibited virtual kiddie porn by banning works that "appear to be" and "convey the impression" of minors in sexual situations. The statute is aimed at the prevention of child molestation—pedophiles use kiddie porn as a recruitment device, and a child told to imitate what they see in a picture would not know the picture wasn't "real." Congress was also concerned that pedophiles could use a digitally altered picture portraying a sexual scene that never actually took place to blackmail innocent children.

Foes of the child porn statute insist that concern over virtual porn is just high-tech hysteria and doubt that the porn itself poses a significant threat to children. *Wired* magazine, for example, asked if "computer-age fears" about virtual porn have "any more basis in reality than your average monster-in-the-closet." Indeed, some porn advocates even argue that virtual child porn should be welcomed as a harmless way for pedophiles to satisfy their appetites.

When I debated *Hustler* founder Larry Flynt on *Politically Incorrect*, the First Amendment maven actually tried to convince us that there are hordes of genteel, dirty old men sitting in their living rooms, smoking pipes, drinking port, and benignly staring at virtual kiddie porn! He insisted that they are hurting no one.

Representing a more commonsense view, Frederick Schauer, professor of the First Amendment at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, testified before Congress that "somewhere in this chain of computer-generated production there are going to be real children involved." Or affected by it. A person who wants child pornography is, by definition, someone who is sexually interested in children. Doesn't this indicate that the porn is used to whet their appetites for real children?

Enter the Free Speech Coalition. This has to be one of the more unusual trade associations: It represents six hundred porn producers, distributors, and "talent." Their logo is the Stars and Stripes; the organization's president is former porn star Gloria Leonard (who boasted last year at the National Press Club of once having been "at the cutting edge of the phenomenon known as 'phone sex'"). Like most trade organizations, this one helps members with health insurance and other porn-industry-specific benefits—like HIV-testing. "Our goals are to improve the quality of life for the people who toil in the adult industry regardless of what their positions are," Leonard said. She admitted that it is "very noble to try and protect children. I'm all for that," but added, "We cannot deny the constitutional rights of adults in seeking to protect children. It's a very dicey domain, to say the least."

The Child Pornography Prevention Act made it especially dicey for a staple of the adult porn industry: web sites featuring "barely legal" eighteen and nineteen-year-old blondes in pig-tails and pinafores portraying salacious innocence. Many of these "actresses" are hired specifically because they "appear to be" much younger and they are paid to "convey the impression" that they are minors. These childish-looking women are the low-tech way of satisfying customers interested sexually in children.

Fearing that this whole segment of the adult industry would be targeted by law enforcement under the new statute, the coalition challenged the constitutionality of the child porn law in California. They asked for a declaratory judgment that the law is unconstitutional. In *Free Speech Coalition v. Reno*, the coalition argued that the congressional prohibition against works that "appear to be" and "convey the impression" of a minor engaged in sexual activity is unconstitutionally vague and over-broad, leaving open the possibility that someone might unintentionally violate the law.

Along with the ubiquitous American Civil Liberties Union, the coalition argued that, while it is all right to legislate against the use of real children in porn, it is going too far to ban the use of computer-generated images. "You really run into a problem of artistic restriction," lawyer H. Louis Sirkin explained.

Judge Donald Molloy, writing for the Ninth Circuit Court, the federal appellate court in California, agreed. Molloy ruled that the statute is so vague that a person of "reasonable in-

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telligence" might not know how to avoid collision with the law. Molloy added that "any victimization of children" that occurs as a result of a pedophile's viewing virtual porn is not a "sufficiently compelling justification," for making virtual pornography illegal.

One member of the three-judge panel disagreed. Judge Warren Ferguson noted, in an important dissent, that the Supreme Court has found the protection of children to be a "compelling" state interest in the past. Ferguson pointed out that the First Amendment does not protect speech that is "utterly without redeeming social importance."

Molloy's ruling couldn't have come at a better time for former Disney executive Patrick Naughton. Naughton was caught in an FBI sting after he began a relationship in a "dad&daughtersex" chat room. Naughton believed he was flirting with a thirteen-year-old virgin—in reality it was undercover Special Agent Bruce Applin. Naughton sent a picture of himself naked below the waist, and Applin sent back a picture of a colleague when she was actually thirteen. Naughton posted both pictures on his web site.

Naughton, who called himself "Hotseattle," eventually convinced his fictitious web-friend to meet him on the Santa Monica pier. He told her that he thought it was "kewl" that she was thirteen and that they had to be careful since what he wanted to do was illegal and that he could go to jail. Applin joked about telling the FBI, saying that Naughton could be arrested. "True," Hotseattle replied.

When Naughton showed up at the Santa Monica pier for his tryst, he was arrested; his laptop contained child pornography. It should be pointed out that Naughton was not content with his erotic computer images of children—he wanted the real thing.

On December 16, 1999, Naughton was convicted by a federal jury of possessing child pornography. He faced the possibility of ten years in prison. However, within hours of Naughton's guilty verdict, Judge Molloy's decision was handed down. Naughton suddenly had a get-out-of-jail-free card.

District Judge Edward Rafeedie vacated Naughton's conviction of possessing child pornography, citing the "unconstitutionality" of the statute. Naughton went free on bond, awaiting a retrial, despite the fact that prosecutors were able positively to identify the children in four of the ten pictures they presented in Naughton's trial. Judge Molloy had provided a loophole for predators like Naughton who think thirteen-year-olds are "kewl."

Molloy's decision also set up a conflict among federal courts—a similar challenge to the child porn act earlier in the year had been decided differently in a Maine case by the First Circuit Appeals Court. David Hilton, who described himself as an anti-porn crusader, originally met with FBI and customs officials to tell them about kiddie porn he received over the Internet. As the Associated Press put it, the agents "began to suspect Hilton's motives were less than pure." Hilton's porn collection included an image of a figure obviously altered digitally to portray an adult woman below the waist and a child above. Hilton was indicted for criminal possession of child pornography.

Predictably, his lawyer attacked the constitutionality of the child porn act, arguing that the law was too vague. An average guy, he claimed, might not know whether he was looking at a legal, adult baby-faced porn star portraying a teenager…or risking jail-time through inadvertent possession of child porn.

The court didn't buy the argument: The First Circuit Court in Maine ruled on appeal against Hilton. In a unanimous decision, the court said that the words "appears to be a minor" are grounded in "prosecutorial necessity." The court further noted that the U.S. Supreme Court had already established that the protection of children through the eradication of child pornography in its entirety is a legitimate societal goal and a compelling state interest. Child pornography, like libel and obscenity, is not protected by the First Amendment.

So, with the federal First and Ninth Circuit Court decisions in direct conflict over the constitutionality of virtual kiddie porn, the stage is set for a showdown at the Supreme Court. The government is appealing Molloy's decision in *Free Speech Coalition v. Reno*, giving the Supreme Court the opportunity to consider the issue.

The stakes are high. FBI Director Louis Freeh recently told Congress that on-line child predators are among the most sophisticated computer criminals. But as Naughton's case illustrates, the courts may well help provide pedophiles a safe techno-haven.

Shortly before his scheduled retrial in March, Patrick Naughton pleaded guilty to the federal charge of crossing state lines to have sex with a minor. As part of his plea, the charge of possession of child pornography was dropped …a fact that won't be lost on pedophiles who haven't been caught yet. Or their defense attorneys.

The good news is the prosecutors got their man. This time. Next time it may be a lot harder. ◆

Charmaine Yoest, author of Mother in the Middle, *is senior editor of* Ex Femina.

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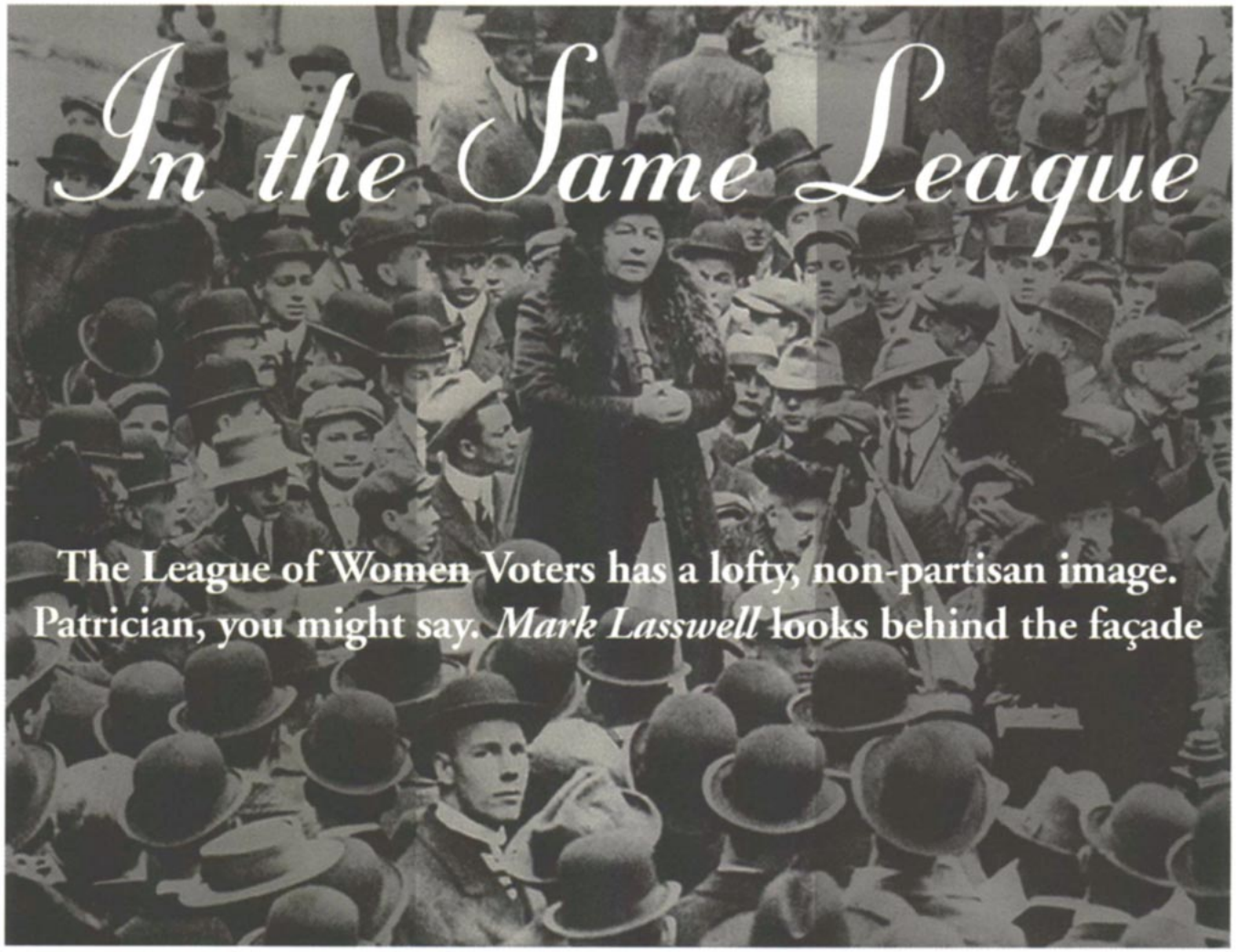
In the Same League



The League of Women Voters has a lofty, non-partisan image. Patrician, you might say. *Mark Lasswell* looks behind the façade

In a spacious, wood-paneled meeting room provided by a major pharmaceutical company this spring, the New York City chapter of the League of Women Voters sponsored a lecture by Jane Connors, chief of women's rights at the United Nations in the division of the Advancement of Women's Rights.

Connors spoke on "Women of Diverse Cultures," to an audience of about seventy-five that was, except for this writer and a late-arriving man in a turban, entirely female. Connor's listeners included a smattering of young professionals, but the audience was skewed firmly toward the middle-aged. There were a few elderly women of the sort you still see occasionally on Manhattan's Upper West Side—wearing graying, girlish hair styles and chunky, colorful sweaters that express solidarity with one indigenous population or another—whose own mothers had been among the first generation of women to vote, and for whom the eighty-year-old league is clearly a beloved institution.

Connors presented an overview of how women are faring throughout the world—Afghanistan still has a long way to go—and then took questions from the audience. Despite all the nastiness that women in other countries and cultures endure, in this setting the United States still took a pretty good walloping for not having done enough to advance women's rights on a global scale. Then again, the U.S. Congress has been ruled by the Republicans most of the past decade, and the expectation in the room was that if the Democrats took over Capitol Hill after the 2000 elections, America would assert stronger leadership on international women's rights issues. One woman seated near the front began a question to Connors in a plaintive tone: "If the Congress in fact changes this fall…"—and a chorus of sympathetic chuckles washed across the room.

The League of Women Voters steadfastly maintains that it is a nonpartisan organization, and it's easy to accept that characterization at first glance. The league attained its highest national profile when presidential debates became a reflexive part of modern campaigning in 1976. The LWV

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sponsored three Carter-Ford debates, and sponsored face-offs of presidential candidates in 1980 and 1984, before the Commission on Presidential Debates took over in 1988. But those first three election campaigns, when debates still were anticipated with more eagerness than dread, established the reputation of the League of Women Voters in the public mind: The league calls itself non-partisan, and the agreement of presidential candidates to debate under the league's umbrella only enhanced the impression of political neutrality. The league is continuing in its role as sponsor of debates and candidate forums in races across the country during the current campaign season. No doubt many participants in these events, and those attending, still have some fuzzy memory of the league's sponsorship of the presidential debates. The League of Women Voters—those are the good government folks interested in promoting an informed electorate and dedicated to encouraging women to go to the polls, right?

Not really. The League of Women Voters would pull the lever for a ticket of liberal-leaning Democratic pieties at every opportunity—though the fault for the misperception lies more with the news media than league subterfuge. By and large, reporters accept at face value the league's insistence that it is non-partisan because, being reporters, they perceive the league's views as middle of the road and acceptable; only those who disagree with it are under suspicion of divisive "partisanship."

While careful not to endorse candidates or parties outright, the league itself couldn't be more open about its advocacy of issues that happen to be entirely in agreement with more overtly partisan women's political organizations such as the National Organization for Women and Emily's List. Well, the league could be a bit more open. I called its national headquarters in Washington, D.C., and spoke to Senior Director of Communications Paul Boertlein, who directed me to the league's web site (www.lwv.org). Almost everything I'd want to know was there, he assured me, and if I needed anything else, just give him a call. I dutifully visited the site and later called Boertlein, leaving a message saying that I hoped to discuss with one of his bosses the league's definition of non-partisanship, but the senior director of communications didn't return my phone calls.

Boertlein was right, though. The LWV web site does tell you almost all you need to know, from the first line in "Our Mission" making the oxymoronic claim of being "a nonpartisan political organization," to the laundry list of position statements that clearly lays out the LWV agenda.

The league is pro-gun control, pro-abortion, and pro-affirmative action. Being a league of voters, the LWV also takes an interest in the voting process: The organization not only worked "tirelessly and successfully" for that pet Democrat project, the "motor voter" National Voter Registration Act in 1993, but continues to support the apparently unending effort to win full congressional representation for the District of Columbia, also fondly known as the "Give Jesse a Job" initiative.

It's not as if the league began as an apolitical organization and became politicized over the years. Carrie Chapman Catt, who founded the League of Women Voters in 1920 during the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, once said, "Winning the vote is only an opening wedge, but to learn to use it is a bigger task." From the beginning, the LWV promoted big government, finding the promise of curing whatever ailed society in government intervention and increased spending (a study last year by the National Taxpayers' Union, a Washington, D.C.-based think-tank that champions lower taxes and less government regulation, estimated that spending programs advocated by the league would cost $870 billion annually).

Catt's impulses have reverberated in the organization down through the years. As the web site states: "In the 1960s, the League's involvement in world affairs included its call for the U.S. to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China and an end to U.S. opposition to China's membership in the Untied [*sic*] nations [*sic*]." This at a time when millions of Chinese were hoping their own rulers would normalize relations with reality and end the Cultural Revolution. Catt also had a certain affection for the Soviet Union; accordingly she was listed in a 1944 *Daily Worker* as sponsor of the Committee of Women for the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

The current president, Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, told *Insight* magazine in December: "I don't think of issues in terms of whether a policy is Democratic or Republican.... After studying and debating issues, the league develops consensus positions which we then actively work to support through grassroots lobbying." The "consensus" approach has been, from the beginning, the league's inoculation against charges of partisanship. League members study and debate the issues, and then let the cards fall where they may. That they invariably fall in the same camp is happenstance. It's a good ploy; in these unexamined times, "grassroots" and

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"consensus" go a long way toward buttressing an organization's non-partisan credentials—so long as everybody in the organization hews to the same fiction and doesn't venture into outright partisan campaigning.

But discipline is difficult to maintain in any self-described "political organization," and the league's fig leaf of non-partisanship slipped badly in April 1996. It will be remembered that many were in a foul mood back then, resentful of the historic Republican success in the 1994 mid-term congressional elections and intensely focused on rolling back the dreaded "Contract with America." There was almost a sense of desperation as the possibility of further Republican gains threatened to keep Democrats out of power for years, if not decades. Enter, the National Organization for Women. Doing its bit to energize its troops for the coming political season, NOW organized the "Fight the Right March" in San Francisco. The march was a magnet for groups intent on demonizing conservative Republicans; among the more than 650 organizations endorsing the "Fight the Right March" was that paragon of non-partisanship: the League of Women Voters.

In addition to the San Francisco chapter of the LWV (which didn't respond to a call requesting comment for this article) and other nationally known groups, such as Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, and ACT-UP, the "Fight the Right March" was also endorsed by: the Alice B. Toklas Lesbian & Gay Democratic Club of San Francisco, Artists Against the Contract on America, Irish Republican Socialist Committee, Network Against War & Fascism/Fight the Right!, Queers for Affirmative Action, and the Hillary Rodham Clinton Fan Club (California and San Francisco chapters). Despite all the endorsements, the 1.7-mile march and bayside rally at Crissy Field, which NOW expected to draw 100,000, attracted a considerably smaller crowd: 50,000 by NOW's estimate, 13,000 by the U.S. park police's. Jesse Jackson and Gloria Steinem were incontestably present.

The LWV and others in the "Fight the Right" marching brigade couldn't have been thrilled that despite their efforts, Democrats failed to regain control of Congress in '96. Marches and petitions and forums and lectures are no substitute for direct political action, such as running for office. With admirable directness, Susan Garrett has demonstrated this. In December 1997, the immediate past president of the League of Women Voters of Lake Forest/Lake Bluff (Illinois) announced that she was running for the Illinois House seat for the 59th state congressional district alongside Lake Michigan. The former president of the local LWV ran, and won, as a Democrat. She is running for re-election this fall.

The last time around, Garrett ran with the endorsement of the Sierra Club, and with the financial support of organized labor, which steered $30,000 to her campaign, making unions among the most generous donors to a campaign that raised $147,558.

This information comes from the folks at Project Vote Smart (www.votesmart.org), an organization dedicated to promoting an informed electorate. Vote Smart is tracking more than 10,000 candidates, and it's hard to detect a whiff of partisanship. They provide biographical information, voting records, financial information, and endorsements. Vote Smart's Kristina Saleh says that the organization made a decision to be non-partisan "so that people can go to our web site and feel confident about the information they're getting." Imagine that. ◆

Mark Lasswell is a contributing editor at Allure.

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The Token Man

Honey from the Hive

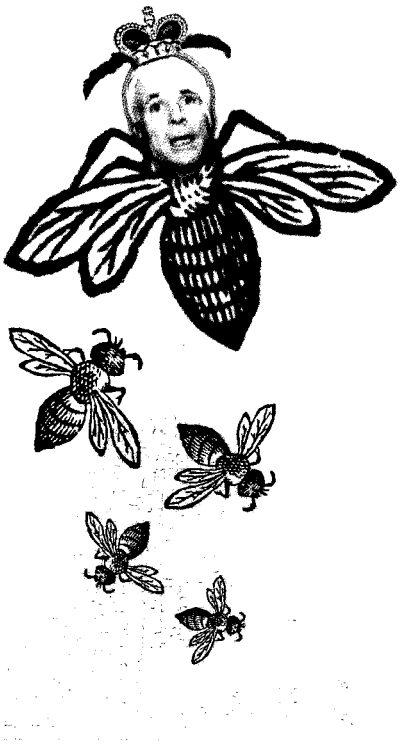
Tom Bethell explains McCain media mania

JOURNALISTS' LOVE AFFAIR with John McCain is ancient history now. Still, it's worth marveling anew. In my twenty-five years in Washington, I never saw anything like it. The media dropped all pretense of objectivity. McCain strategist Mike Murphy told the *Wall Street Journal* that the media were "our base," while *Newsweek*'s Howard Fineman referred to the press as McCain's "constituency."

Writing in *George* magazine, Ann Coulter calculated the free press from the *New York Times* alone (where a quarter-page ad on the op-ed page goes for $28,170) was worth more than $2.2 million to McCain last year. And this was before New Hampshire!

When the media fly in formation, I think of the Hive. That metaphor was intended to show that liberals, socialists, and communists work toward the same goal. First used twenty years ago by the conservative writer Joe Sobran, it answered those on the Right who saw (and still see) the pattern of modern politics as produced by a conspiracy. Birchers and others saw there was a pattern, but they misconstrued it. They thought Masons or Bilderbergers were the prime movers. But the real situation was actually worse than they knew. You only have to conspire when the law is against you. In the 1930s, communism was indeed seen as subversive and its supporters were forced underground. But by the 1960s there was no longer any need for secrecy. Progressives could communicate openly, in the media.

Real bees in a hive perform different tasks and coordinate by open signaling. Ducks fly in formation without meeting beforehand. What goes on in their "minds" we don't know or need to know. In the political Hive, the queen bee was the Kremlin, supported by a network of worker bees that didn't "take orders" or need any instruction. The metaphor commits McCarthyism, proudly, and it eliminates the embarrassment of conspiracy. The Hive has always made war on the same enemies: property, family, and religion. The English socialist Robert Owen even referred to these three as the "trinity of evils."



Since the death of the Kremlin queen, the workers have been in disarray. But they still make their accustomed rounds out of habit; here defending Fidel, there attacking Pinochet, or sending John Rocker to re-education camp (a true Hive moment). The McCain phenomenon was also strikingly Hive-like. Out of the blue, here was a "conservative" that the *New York Times*, Al Hunt, Anthony Lewis, and E.J. Dionne were wild about! Was there something we hadn't been told?

There was. The *Washington Post*'s Richard Cohen relayed this: "McCain's people whisper, Don't worry. He's not really so anti-abortion. He'll come around on gay rights, gun control, and almost anything else you can name." Cohen and Steven Brill were the only journalists who passed this "straight talk" on to the public. How many others must have received the same message?

Whispered secrets seem un-Hive-like, because the whole idea is open communication. Sometimes, however, it's necessary to keep things under wraps until the people are ready; the old commies of the 1930s would surely have understood. Then McCain's true animus against the "religious right" came out in Virginia Beach, and the pieces all fell into place. (When you see the phrase "religious right," substitute the word religion.)

John Fund of the *Wall Street Journal* has also taken note of the more assertive role of the media, who are "intervening more and more," he says. Here is a theory as to why: Twenty years ago, liberals thought victory ultimately was assured. The people, although "apathetic," were sure to support them once they saw that disinterested Virtue was arrayed against greedy self-interest. Now, the liberals are not so sure. The discovery that welfare traps and demoralizes its recipients was a blow to their self-esteem. Coming up soon: more embarrassment, because the National Education Association's insistence that poor kids must stay in the government-school ghetto is dogma.

I think the media recognize that the weakened liberal position means that the people have to be fed a stronger message. It's not hard to predict that, in the fall, the media will do for Gore what they did for McCain. Perhaps with a dash of subtlety. ◆

Tom Bethell is Washington correspondent for the American Spectator.

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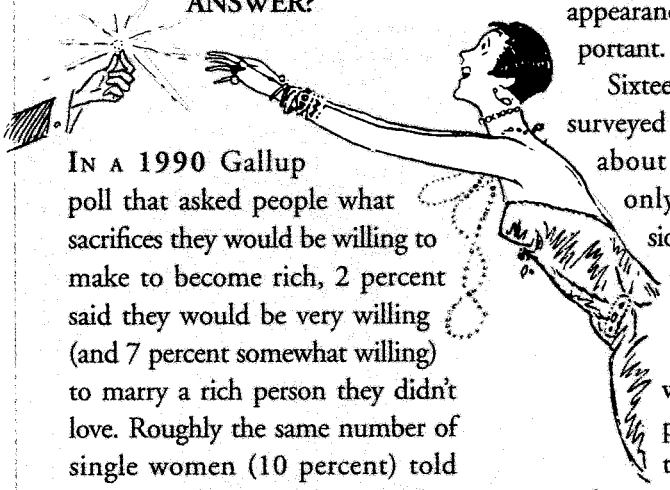
KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri

IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?



In a 1990 Gallup poll that asked people what sacrifices they would be willing to make to become rich, 2 percent said they would be very willing (and 7 percent somewhat willing) to marry a rich person they didn't love. Roughly the same number of single women (10 percent) told Gallup this year that if they had an opportunity they would "do what Darva Conger did—compete in a televised contest to marry a multimillionaire [they] had never seen, with the option of having an annulment if it didn't work out." Ninety percent weren't that desperate.

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

In a 1999 Roper Starch Worldwide poll, 89 percent of women (and 78 percent of men) said they were "pleased when people notice and comment" on their appearance. Women were much more likely to agree that "the way you look affects the way you feel" (82 to 67 percent). Nearly 40 percent of women, compared to 22 percent of men, told Roper interviewers that it took them more than 30 minutes to get ready in the morning. Thirty-six percent of women called makeup "a necessity, not a luxury."

In the poll, 28 percent chose the statement "it's always important to look your best," down from 36 percent who gave that response a decade ago. A majority described appearance as "usually" important.

Sixteen percent of those surveyed said they thought about their appearance only on special occasions. Five percent say they never thought about it at all.

Two-thirds of women in the Roper Starch poll said that men were more attracted to women's good looks than to their brains and personality. When it comes to marriage, near majorities in two polls taken almost fifty years apart thought men cared more about looks than brains. Forty-seven percent of women in Gallup polls in 1949 and in 1997 gave that response. In both years, slightly more than 35 percent said men cared more about smarts.

STUCK IN A CHAT ROOM

Earlier this year, the irrepressible Frank Luntz devised a series of poll questions about the attributes and character traits of the presidential candidates. George Bush "won" the categories "most likely to be audited by the IRS" and "most likely to have cheated in college." Women in the poll said Bush was the candidate they would prefer to marry.

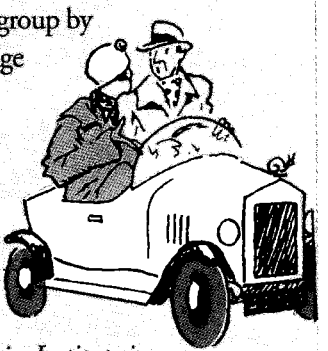
Al Gore had the dubious distinction of being the candidate people "would least like to talk to in an Internet chat room," "would rather kill [themselves] than be stuck alone with for a week," and "is most likely to be an alien." In his favor, Al was the candidate "most likely to be chosen as a 'lifeline'" on the TV show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire.*

WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

In March, John Zogby looked at candidate preferences by astrological sign. Overall, 42 percent of Americans favored Gore, and 45 percent George W. Bush. But Gore did much better than Bush among those born under the signs of Sagittarius, Aquarius, and Pisces. Bush ruled among those born under the sign of Aries, Taurus, and Cancer.

MOST DRIVEN

A quarter of Americans told Gallup recently that they owned sport utility vehicles. Bush swamped Gore among the group by 19 percentage points. ◆



Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.

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Book Review

The Emasculated Church

Did feminism begin in a monastery? A new book argues that it did. ***Mary Ellen Bork*** says it's more complicated than that

The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity, by Leon J. Podles (Spence Publishing Company, 288 pages, $27.95; $14.00 paper)

WHY ARE GATHERINGS of Promise Keepers such big media events? Why is a press normally uninterested in, if not hostile to, religion, fascinated by this particular evangelical movement? Because it is rare to see large groups of men praying and talking about God. On Sunday, some congregations are predominantly made up of women with a sprinkling of men. When the press regards men praying together as a "phenomenon," churches are facing a crisis.

Author Leon Podles contends that men attend church less frequently than women because of what he calls a feminized Christian piety. According to Podles, worship, prayers, exhortations to virtue, and hymns appeal more to women. He argues that Christianity began as a masculine religion in which life was a spiritual battle with the forces of evil, an image that men liked. *The Church Impotent* traces the feminization of Christian life to the twelfth century and three forces: the writings of an influential monk, the rise of scholasticism, and the growth of women's monastic orders.

Before the twelfth century Christian life and devotion were influenced by, among others, St. Augustine and St. Benedict who saw the spiritual life as a manly battle with the forces of evil. The discipline of spiritual perfection meant rigorous bodily asceticism and growth in virtue modeled on the great saints and early martyrs. Men could relate to a spirituality that called for a heroic response to God's grace.

A more feminine spirituality entered the Church with St. Bernard of Clairvaux, preacher of the Second Crusade and an influential friend of twelfth-century leaders, secular and ecclesiastical. Bernard introduced a new idea, that the soul was a bride of God and God the bridegroom to the soul. Bernard used erotic language to express the love relationship with God. He was referring to a tradition found in the Song of Songs in the Old Testament in which David used erotic language to speak of the soul's relation with God. (Comparing your love's teeth to a flock of sheep may not be considered erotic today, but it was then!) The early Church fathers also used bridal imagery, but they referred to the whole Church as the bride of Christ rather than the individual soul.

The book, oddly, does not trace the feminization of Christian imagery to the Old Testament Song of Songs. But Podles does think that the Old Testament is inherently masculine and marked by a positive sense of patriarchy in which men had to prove themselves ready to be fathers and show by their actions that they could be faithful to God's way. The patriarchy they achieved set Israel apart

Drawing by Sandy McClelland

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from other Middle Eastern religions. In Israel, men were responsible for their families in imitation of Yahweh who cared passionately for Israel. Solomon's song expressed God's love for Israel. There was no place in this culture for the sentimentality that later weakened Christianity.

The shift to bridal language appealed to women and their emotions. The soul was described as on fire with love and suffering with passion for God. The relationship with Christ was a love affair leading to betrothal and spiritual marriage. Podles thinks that this spirituality of "bridal mysticism" appealed so powerfully to feminine sensibilities that it led to a dramatic increase in the number of women's religious orders.

Added to Bernard's imagery of the soul as bride was the flowering of scholasticism, the theological method of medieval times. Scholasticism was a way of thinking about the doctrines of faith, applying logic and philosophy to religious truth. Podles thinks this method created a separation between the heart and the mind, between spirituality and theology. Theology became more logical (a science) and spirituality a matter of heart and emotions.

At the end of the Middle Ages women heard a language that touched their hearts and they flocked to nunneries. Many new women's orders such as the Poor Clares thrived, and women's branches of established male orders such as the Dominicans saw an influx of women into their cloisters. Some authors contend that the convent was the only new venue open to women in a patriarchal structure, to be a spiritual athlete in the cloister. But the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were times of urban growth and cultural change that opened new freedoms for women, many of whom found the cultural and spiritual mission of the Church attractive enough to give their lives to it.

The thesis that Christianity became feminized in the twelfth century is intriguing but off the mark. The Christian religion cannot be characterized as masculine or feminine. In his desire to explain the absence of men in the pews, Podles has exaggerated the effect of Bernard's teaching on medieval women. Bernard was the greatest master of language in the Middle Ages and everyone read him in the same way everyone read Cardinal Newman in the nineteenth century. But that his teaching contributed to feminizing devotional practices is a leap, a theoretical bungee jump. Many scholastics were also mystical writers. Applying reason to faith helped safeguard Christians from sentimental spirituality because they could explain their beliefs and recognize heresy.

One of the hallmarks of Christianity is the great variety of spiritual approaches to God. Bridal mysticism is one of many ways of speaking about God and the soul and an attractive one at that. Most spiritual writers speak of the soul as feminine in relation to God because, before the Transcendent, the human person is totally dependent—the creature before the Creator—on the receiving end of everything. The bridal mysticism of Bernard was not new in the church.

While Podles offers an intriguing theory of the feminization of Christianity, he is unaware of the complex state of religion today. For one thing, men do attend church—I see plenty of them in my own church every Sunday. The real problem with churches has more to do with caving into contemporary cultural changes—including New Age fads and secular feminism—than to anything that happened in the twelfth century. ◆

Mary Ellen Bork is a member of the board of the Catholic Campaign for America.

Forget Guns—What You Need is Estrogen Replacement

When Linda Chavez remarked recently on "To the Contrary," the PBS public affairs show, that she feels safer in the country with a gun, host Bonnie Erbe, who makes a lot of her feminist credentials, shot back that Chavez needn't worry about being raped—she's too old. Chavez is 52.

According to a transcript posted on National Review Online, *the exchange went like this:*

Chavez: "If you're someone like me, who lives out in a rural area—if someone breaks into my house and wants to murder or rape me or steal my property, it'll take half an hour for a policeman to get to me."

Erbe: "And if you look at the statistics, I bet you have a greater chance of being struck by lightening, Linda, living where you live and at your age than of being raped. Sorry."

Erbe is sticking to her guns. She told NR Online*: "A woman living in a rural area and at a post-menopausal age statistically is not likely to be a rape target." Erbe accused Chavez of planting the* NR *story: "I know and accept your insecurities," she emailed Chavez, "and I expect insecure people and especially conservatives to lie and play games."*

Maybe Bonnie is just suffering from raging hormones, Linda. ◆

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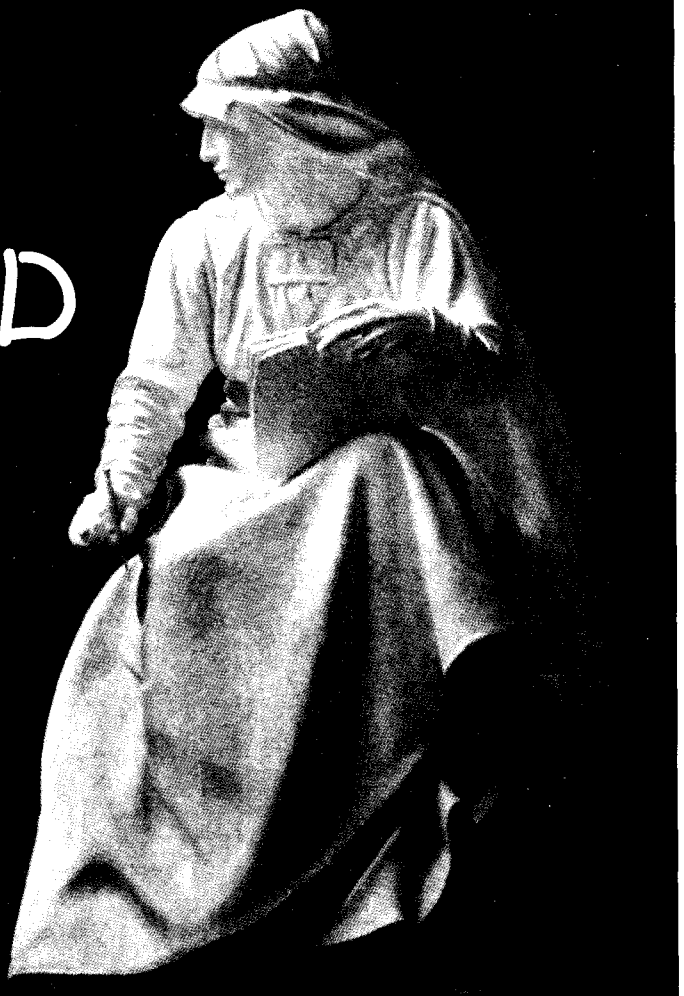
CLIO BANISHED

Social studies has replaced history in the nation's schools. *Sean Wilentz* says we need to bring back the muse



THE FIERCE BATTLE over the proposed national history standards for America's schools may well be remembered as one of the high points (or, more likely, one of the low points) in the culture wars of the 1990s. Even now, several years after a revised set of rigorous standards won broad assent from history educators, some of the belligerents still nurse bad feelings.

Yet for all of the attendant harsh rhetoric and headline-grabbing, the history standards controversy may prove far less consequential for the future of history education in this country than will a far less publicized series of fights over the teaching of history and social studies in the nation's schools. Although it was heavily freighted with political opportunism, the attack on the history standards was essentially concerned with what sort of history should be taught to our children. Almost completely lost in the shuffle has been the momentous and continuing debate over how much history, of any kind, should be taught.

To an alarming degree, public educators around the country do not believe that history is a fundamental academic subject. Instead, they would require students to learn updated versions of the old mishmash known as "social studies," taking up current events, world cultures, and related matters, with curricula that feature little historical content. These educators, including some state superintendents of public education, like to pose as courageous progressives who want to liberate our schoolchildren from the tyranny of rote instruction and the misbegotten worship of dead heroes. But if they have their way, the historical illiteracy of today's young Americans will only worsen in the generations to come.

Professional scholars ignore this threat—to their great peril. Unless they are the parents of school-age children, college and university historians generally are clueless about history's banishment from the schools. We lament that our undergraduates, even in the best institutions, seem remarkably unprepared when it comes to basic

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historical knowledge. We note, along with the rest of the educated citizenry, the shocking results when high-school students are tested on matters as simple as when the Civil War or the Great Depression occurred. Depending on our viewpoints, we blame the bad news on everything from the deleterious influence of television and video games to a supposed waning of public appreciation for the past. At either end of the political spectrum, old prejudices get redeployed: Whereas hardline conservatives are apt to fault—what else?—the '60s counterculture for the current historical illiteracy, multicultural leftists snarl about the hegemony of white male privilege. That is, we blame everything except the demonstrable decades-old decline in American history education.

The origins of this mess date back to the Progressive Era and its immediate aftermath. Inspired by the so-called "new history" of James Harvey Robinson and others, educators began looking for ways to teach history to youngsters in a more comprehensive and "useable" way than traditional methods allowed, embracing the history of social and economic development as well as of politics. These early efforts had the merit of expanding the potential of historical instruction. In the 1920s, for example, a widely used secondary school textbook, *An American History*, by Columbia University historian David Muzzey, became the bellwether of the new departure by bravely and intelligently challenging the conventional schoolroom filiopiety and complacency—and came under heavy fire from alarmed superpatriots. In the 1930s, however, the controversial textbooks of Harold Rugg, who was not a historian but a professor at Columbia Teachers College, took matters a dangerous step further by trying to embed history in a grander system of social knowledge, thereby slighting the distinctive qualities of historical inquiry. Even more troubling, meanwhile, was the rise of something called "social studies" in some of the nation's black colleges, a field designed by well-meaning paternalists as a practical alternative to history for students they deemed unprepared for the rigors of historical studies.

By the late 1960s, advocates of social studies (no longer confined to the black colleges) transformed themselves from a group of advocates into a formidable power within American public education, led by progressive ideologues who berated the study of history as little more than fact-grubbing. As the social studies establishment consolidated its power within the nation's education schools and curriculum committees, college and university historians abandoned what had once been a strong professional interest in the state of history teaching at the primary and secondary levels. Although history continued to be taught in the schools, it increasingly became restricted to high-school advanced placement courses open to the brightest students in the more privileged areas of the country. The masses got social studies.

Only in the late 1980s, with the odd convergence of a few concerned historians (some liberal, some conservative) and George Bush, the self-declared "education president," did matters begin to change. Around the country, state departments of education discovered to their distress that history requirements in most schools had dwindled to trivial levels. While state officials fretted and began undertaking revisions, a National History Task Force, under the direction of Lynne Cheney, head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, began discussing the possibility of constructing a set of voluntary national standards for history instruction from the kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In what later proved an ironic match, the task force gave the job of devising the standards to the liberal-minded National Center for History in the Schools, based at the University of California at Los Angeles under the directorship of Gary Nash. After two years of work, the history center's proposals were ready to see the light of day, when Cheney—displaced by the Clinton victory in 1992—unleashed a blistering surprise attack on the project in the *Wall Street Journal*, initiating the great two-year history standards debate.

That debate was only the beginning. Even in their revised and improved form, the national history standards were really just suggestions; federal officials could not force states to live up to them. Therefore, since 1996, the action has shifted to the state level, where boards of regents and departments of education have been trying to implement calls for new and exacting standards in all areas of primary and secondary instruction. The terms of debate have shifted here, as well, from what types of historical subjects should be taught to whether much history should be taught at all. As soon as efforts to establish state history standards began, proponents of social studies, including the National Council for the Social Studies, took the offensive. Some of them claimed that the proposed reforms were Eurocentric—a curious charge, in view of the struggles over alleged multicultural biases in the National Standards, from which many state efforts take inspiration. Others claimed that the reforms

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demanded too much both of students and (more tellingly) of the large numbers of social studies faculty members, who are inadequately prepared in history. Above all, the social studies supporters asserted that the reforms would unfairly elevate the discipline of history—what one leading social-studies educator has derided as "pastology"—in a disguised attempt to turn back the clock to an America of white-bread smugness and memorized facts.

Such criticisms might be valid if the study of history were the same today as it was eighty years ago, when the social studies movement got underway. History teaching was, indeed, a narrow enterprise, dedicated to drumming names and dates into schoolchildren's heads, and limited to the chief political and diplomatic episodes of the past. But the field of history has changed dramatically. Emphasis now falls not simply on the recitation of facts (a necessary chore, *pace* progressive dogma), but also on the interpretation of facts and primary documents. Social studies, meanwhile, has mutated into a catchall field, blending bits and pieces of the different social sciences with an emphasis on "process" and practical skills rather than on content and historical knowledge. Or, in the words of one of its advocates, James L. Barth of Purdue University, "Social studies is the interdisciplinary integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of practicing problem solving and decision making for developing citizenship skills on crucial social issues."

Beneath such boilerplate descriptions lurks a fundamental disregard of history as a vital subject. To be sure, social studies programs may instruct students in historical events, like the Protestant Reformation or the American Revolution. But those events assume importance only to the extent that they have relevance to our own world—to aid in "decision making—on crucial social issues." The pastness of the past is lost—and with it the humanizing lesson that people in history, although every bit as intelligent as ourselves, thought and lived in ways very different from our own. Areas of history that cannot be easily connected to current priorities inevitably are neglected. Diverse ideas and cultures are reduced to one-dimensional subjects or "factors," divorced from their sources and their historical lineage. Furthermore, the teaching of crucial facts, such as when the Bastille fell, is demoted in favor of teaching abstract concepts. Thus students may learn nothing about the presidency of Abraham Lincoln except as it pertains to the persistence of racism in the United States.

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Advocates of more demanding history standards have gained some ground. In 1995, Virginia's Board of Education, supported by Governor George Allen and the American Federation of Teachers, adopted strenuous learning standards in history, geography, civics, and economics, from kindergarten through high school, making history the integrative core of the proposed curriculum. Equally impressive curriculum frameworks in history and social science have been adopted in California and Massachusetts, and similar reforms are being debated in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, and other states.

The fate of these reforms is far from certain. Predictably, the social studies lobby has impugned the reformers' political motives, attacking the curriculums as tools for reactionary fact-grubbers and mindless patriots.

The real issue here is not one of right and left, as the social studies lobby contends. It is whether history, as it now is taught and studied, ought to be a key element of schooling in the United States. However benevolent its origins, traditional social studies education has outlived its usefulness—with the sad result that most of today's schoolchildren are ignorant of the most basic information about their own country's past. Professional historians, who have a larger stake than most in reversing this trend, can make their greatest contribution by educating themselves about the situation in their states and localities, and by joining forces with the beleaguered forces for reform. ◆

This is adapted from an essay in Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society, *edited by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn (Routledge, 1999). Sean Wilentz is the Dayton-Stockton professor of history and director of the Program in American Studies at Princeton University.*

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Correspondence

A Piece of Cake

THE INTERVIEW WITH Christina Hoff Sommers [*TWQ*, No. 21] was brilliant and truly an effective refutation of Susan Faludi's well-received con job [*Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*]. Faludi actually did deliberately interview mostly men of less than adequate maturity for this book. Anyone with even the slightest bit of training in psychology can see through Faludi's bias—even feminists. Please convey my sincere "congrats" to Christina. Allow a reader to make a strong recommendation: Make Dave Shiflett more than just an occasional contributor; his "Let 'Em Eat Cake" [TWQ, No. 21] was good. And I mean real good!

George Jackson
Cincinnati, Ohio

Galled Goddess Gal

I THOUGHT CHARLOTTE HAYS' diary on goddess worship ["Goddess Gals," *TWQ*, No. 21] was just about the most pretentious thing I've ever read. Who does this woman think she is? Hays pretends to be learned and even quotes a poem in Latin. But I'll bet she doesn't really have any idea how to read Latin. I feel certain that Hays is a phony.

She certainly doesn't know that many women derive spiritual strength from Wicca and don't care to be mocked for their beliefs. I was disappointed in her tastelessness and bewildering lack of sensitivity.

Marjorie McBride
Via email

The Realm of Narnia

READING A RECENT Camille Paglia column in *Salon*, I casually clicked a link to something called *The Women's Quarterly* and found myself transported, like one of those Narnia kids, to a fabulous realm of

wonders and prodigies. Here were intelligent, unembittered women rebutting the Jacobins of feminism with a practical, non-ideological approach to the issues of male-female relations—and doing it with style and wit! What a relief! Maybe men and women can coexist after all. Maybe they can even enjoy each other's company.

"First Ladies in Waiting" [*TWQ*, No. 21] made me laugh out loud—especially the part about Pat Buchanan putting his enemies list on his web site. As characterization, it was dead-on, damning and, amazingly, affectionate. It gave the devil his due. Such an approach suggests a writer with a sense of proportion and a generous spirit. Rare traits these days, but essential.

Dan Greaney
Via email

Rational Minds

IT'S GOOD TO know that there are women out there who do not make our sex look like idiots, and think with rational minds. By the way, my boss was the one who gave me the recent issue of *The Women's Quarterly* that I read, and yes, he is a man.

Kimberly Garrett
Via email

Rude Britannia Revisited

I FIND IT a little disturbing that Rhoda Koenig ["Rude Britannia," *TWQ*, No. 20] attributes the growth of bad manners in Britain entirely to "materialism." Back when the UK suffered from laissez-faire capitalism, it grew into one of the most polite and considerate societies ever. When the Labor Party took over in 1945, class envy and an entitlement mentality began to take over. By the time Mrs. Thatcher came to power, Britain was being called the "Sick Man of Europe." English soccer fans had become the terror of the sport.

Those developments, I would say, were the result of socialism, not of "consumerism." Adults now, as you know well from the U.S., are still often embodiments of 1960's radicalism; and in England the Laborites are back in power. Ms. Koenig should have had a clue about this from the New York she fled. What turned New York into the wasteland it had become by the 1980's? Laissez-faire? Or, perhaps, the nastiest of the leftist shibboleths (*e.g.*, rent control) that have ever been applied in the United States. New York was not a Babylon of consumerism; it was Moscow-on-the-Hudson, steadily constructed as such since the end of World War II. A clue about this in Britain is evident in Koenig's own story: She could not find a politically correct term for the "lower class" neighborhood near her own—class warfare does not allow disparaging, or even accurate, characterizations of the oppressed.

Kelley L. Ross
Van Nuys, California

Daughter of the Sexual Revolution

ALTHOUGH I HAVE only been a college student for a few months now, I found the article "Daughters of the Sexual Revolution: They don't quite know why, but they feel they're getting shortchanged" by Pia Nordlinger [*TWQ*, No. 20] to be 100 percent correct. I shared the article with several of my sorority sisters, and much to our dismay we recognized ourselves in certain aspects of the article. It is stunning how accurate it was.

Julia Phillips
Fort Worth, Texas

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One last observation . . .

The Big Girl Game

Claudia Winkler says there's nothing like a sister

I CAN HARDLY imagine contentment more complete than what Stef and I long derived from The Big Girl Game. We played it for years, from late toddler-hood to early adolescence. "Gig Birl," as we called it for short, was an exercise in pretend, a kind of practicing at being grown-ups, and as a game, it had wonderful virtues. It required no special gear, but could incorporate whatever props or people were at hand; it could be played any time, any place, even in company, inconspicuously, so that bystanders didn't necessarily realize that the two of us weren't actually Stephanie and Claudia Crutcher at all, but Mary Shifley, wife of Bill Shifley and harried mother of a rather dreadful gaggle of five kids.

Bill, whom we got off the Prudential Life Insurance ad on TV, was handsome and dignified—and entirely a background figure. As far as I remember, our interaction with him was nil. Mostly, the two of us—or the one of us, depending on how you look at it—faced our challenges alone. In the Queen of England series, we bore up under the burdens of royalty. When Bill was governor of New York, we juggled the demands on a politician's wife. The Hectic Day series (triggered when one of us would say to the other, "Sis, I've had such a hectic day!") was marked by domestic turbulence often requiring the sending of our difficult second son Bob (his full name, inexplicably, was Bobbus Day) to reform school; by complicated strategizing to prevent Mother, an overbearing soul, from spoiling the children; and by elaborate preparations for dinner parties, whose insufferable guest of honor was General de Gaulle.

I had never heard of General de Gaulle, but Stef had. She had heard of

algebra, too, and once she asked our mother who Eleanor Roosevelt was, and I wondered: If she doesn't know who Eleanor Roosevelt is, how does she find out that there is even such a question to ask?

Stef, or Steffy as she then was, is the oldest of four sisters and sixteen months my senior, so just that little bit ahead in worldliness when we were growing up. Her chronological edge combined with a native assertiveness and creativity to make her the leader of our games. Yet she was never bossy or unkind (leaving aside the time she threw my sewing basket out of our second-story bedroom window, an uncharacteristically vengeful bit of histrionics). Most often, she was simply part of me. Ours was a closeness not chosen but given, and strengthened by all we shared: the natural affinities that make two people friends, on top of ancestry, much formative experience, and sameness of sex. And with this likeness have come inexpressible comforts, such as the comfort of not having to explain.

When Stef told me a while back that she had hated *The Stone Diaries* so much she had literally flung the book across the room, my heart rejoiced. I've never read *The Stone Diaries* and don't intend to. I'm serenely confident that if I did, I would dislike it too, and in just the same way she did. I trust her judgment as unreservedly as I relish its signature vehemence of expression. The other side of the coin is that our rare disagreements—Mrs. Clinton's first inaugural gown remains a sore point—are always disconcerting.

This sisters' bond is an intimacy of commonality, and its opposite is marriage. If the tie between siblings is organic, that of spouses is artificial, binding unalikes, building a new family on the union of two who share neither genes nor family background. Marriage is the intimacy of complementarity, in which a chasm of difference, even an irreducible core of mutual incomprehension, is bridged by attraction, choice, commitment, and both kinds of love.

So it's only fitting that in the midst of an early clash in what would become his splendid marriage to Stef, my brother-in-law David, fending off her impossible expectations of female-style communication, memorably blurted out in self-defense, "Stef, you didn't marry one of your sisters!" ◆

Claudia Winkler is managing editor of the Weekly Standard.

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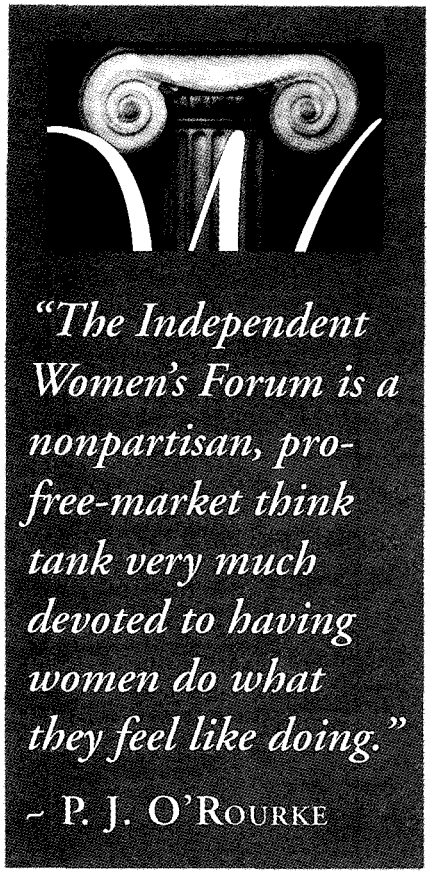
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